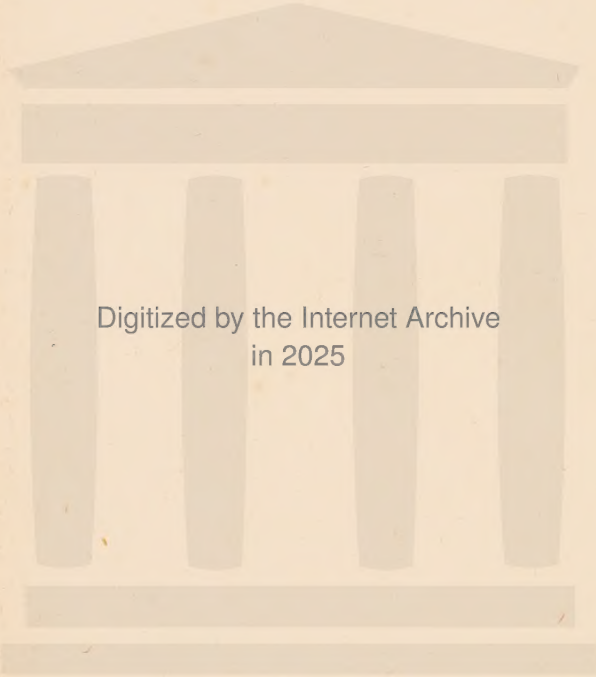




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PHILIP LYNDON'S TROUBLES.

BY
EDITH OWEN BOURNE.

Man-like is it to fall into sin,
Fiend-like is it to dwell therein,
Christ-like is it for sin to grieve,
God-like is it all sin to leave.
LONGFELLOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II.



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PHILIP LYNDON'S TROUBLES.



CHAPTER I.

DESPONDENCY.

‘ And is this all ?
Then, oh, you blessed ministers above,
Keep me in patience !’

SHAKESPEARE.

PHILIP walked home, after parting from Blanche, in a very gloomy state of mind. He realised, more fully than he had ever done before, the breadth and the depth of the gulf that lay between him and Blanche. His mind perceived the nature of the obstacles that prevented Blanche from giving him her love, and the conviction forced itself upon him that all which she could feel for him was pity. She was sorry

for him—and that was all. Wounded affection and mortified pride prompted him, at that moment, to turn from the hand which could give so little. He felt angry with the very purity which had drawn him towards her, because it, at the same time, made it impossible for him to approach her. He might dash himself in vain against the barrier that divided them. No strivings of penitence, no agony of remorse, could blot out the past; his image would be linked for ever in her mind with the thought of sin and shame—of that indelible stain which had become ingrained into his soul.

When he entered the surgery he found Tom sitting at his desk. That youngster had been occupying his leisure-moments in writing his own name in various hands, and in drawing caricatures of the Rector on a sheet of blotting-paper, whistling softly meanwhile the tunes that they had sung at church. He jumped down as Philip entered, but not with the precipitation with which he would formerly have done; for Philip, though he often spoke sharply to his brother, had behaved very differently to him since the evening which had brought him so much trouble.

Philip sat down at his desk and began to

turn over the leaves of his book, and to make some entries in it which he had neglected. There was something in his manner which struck Tom, and he stood by his brother without speaking.

‘Is anything the matter, Phil?’ he asked.

‘Nothing more than usual,’ answered Philip. He glanced at Tom, and his stricken heart was comforted by the earnest affection expressed in his brother’s countenance.

‘Tom,’ he said, in a voice which quivered a little, ‘I hope, whatever happens, that you will never turn against me.’

‘Oh, Phil, I am sure I shall never do that,’ cried Tom, and he put his arm round his brother’s neck in a momentary caress.

‘I wonder what is the matter now?’ he thought. ‘I suppose Miss Ainslie has not been kind to him. What do people want to be in love for? It’s no good.’

Tom was often considerably at a loss to know how to spend his time on Sunday. He had not much to do in the surgery, and Philip did not expect him to study on that day. To go to church once was all, Tom thought, that could reasonably be expected of him, and the rest of the day was rather difficult to dispose of. On other days there was work and study

to occupy his faculties, besides the society of Harry Mansfield—mischief, also, forming a ready resource at any convenient interval; but on Sunday all these failed, and Tom was often induced to seek the society of Fred Scott, or of some other rather questionable individual, in sheer inability to know what to do with himself. These young gentlemen did not hesitate to let Tom know that they were not particularly grateful for his company, as he cared for them only when the society of Harry Mansfield was not available. Tom resented this with becoming spirit, and on one such occasion a pitched battle had taken place between him and Fred, in Mrs. Scott's garden; and that was considered by the Scotts, though they were not at all inclined to be rigid in their ideas, as a disreputable way of spending a Sunday afternoon. Fanny spent most of her time on that day at church, or at school, or else with the Scotts, intercourse with whom was pleasantly enlivened by sundry flirtations with Mr. Teddy.

Sunday at the Mansfields' was passed in quite a different spirit. The time that remained from church and school duties was spent in the study of subjects connected with religion and in social intercourse; Blanche and Reginald generally

coming, after the evening service, for an hour or two.

Harry had been trying for some time to get permission for Tom to spend some part of the Sunday with him ; but Stanton, fond as he was of Tom, and highly as he thought of him in some respects, was a little doubtful of his influence over Harry on other points ; he thought that Tom's presence on that day would tend to divest it of its calm and peaceful character, and that it would be quite as well to have one day in the week in which, as Reginald expressed it, Tom was kept 'on the right side of the door.'

Harry was now being prepared for confirmation ; he had been trying to induce his friend to go through the preparatory course, when the incident of the broken rose-tree put an end to all discussion of the subject ; Tom stoutly declaring that he was not going to be catechised by Mr. Ainslie—he had had enough of it ; and as to being confirmed, if he were in the habit of telling lies, he had better not be confirmed in *that*.

When the evening of Mrs. Carrington's ball arrived, Philip was in as unsuitable a frame of mind for such an occasion as could well be imagined. He felt disgusted with all the world,

himself included ; and had it not been that he was afraid his absence would offend Mrs. Carrington, he would have stayed away. Fanny was amazed at the deliberate way in which he made his preparations. He seemed willing to allow any trifle to hinder him. His indifference she attributed to the fact that Miss Ainslie would not be there. Philip, however, felt at that moment as if even her presence would not have made him wish to go.

It was rather late when he arrived at the Hall. Mrs. Carrington received him kindly ; she perceived the gloom which hung over him, and which he was not able entirely to conceal, and, with true womanly tact, she hastened to dispel it. She possessed a genuine kindness of nature and a power of sympathy which were truly charming, and she was mistress of that rare art of pleasing which is able to soften down unpleasantness as the sunshine dispels the mist ; while at the same time her nobler and more endearing qualities satisfied the heart, and her more brilliant ones captivated the imagination. She never missed an opportunity of doing a kind action, or used her influence on the side of harshness or severity ; and though she sometimes formed injudicious friendships, it was because she allowed herself to be guided

by the dictates of fancy, rather than by those of judgment. If occasionally, in furtherance of some cherished plan, she overstepped the bounds of conventional usage, she did it with such graceful tact, that the objects of her winning courtesy were invariably charmed into admiration, if they were not convinced by reason.

Philip willingly accorded her the tribute of admiration which she exacted, and that he felt was her due ; and she gave him that sympathy and kindness of which he stood so much in need, and that he had sought in vain in the direction in which the higher instincts of his nature had led him. He hesitated whether it would be desirable to mention to Mrs. Carington the family of the injured man whom he was attending, fearing that, occupied by the feelings which were suggested by the brilliant scene and the gay company around them, she would not have sufficient leisure of mind to enter on such a topic ; but the reflection that it might be some time before he should have another opportunity, urged him to approach the subject cautiously. He was agreeably surprised at the warm interest with which she entered into his plans, listening to his suggestions, promising to call and form an opinion

of the case herself, and appointing a time when he should come for further consultation on the subject.

Mrs. Carrington was sincerely anxious to do good to her less fortunate neighbours, but she had no exact idea of how to perform this duty, and no plan on which to work. Her husband was wholly absorbed in the pursuit of pleasure, and in the gratification of his sporting propensities. The Rector, instead of giving the desired counsel, always agreed to everything that Mrs. Carrington said; and when any information was asked for by her, he was dilatory in furnishing it, and it had also the disadvantage of being obtained at second-hand; while the curate, in his dislike to have anything to do with the Carringtons, had frequently annoyed her by taking matters into his own hands, and dealing with cases himself, instead of letting her have an opportunity of giving help and sympathy.

The guidance of a clear sound judgment, such as Philip possessed, joined to a practical knowledge of the class which she was anxious to benefit, was just what she had been seeking; and she listened eagerly to his suggestions, how to help the family to help themselves, without pauperising them by too much pecuniary as-

sistance, though some at the present crisis was also indispensable.

Philip returned home in a calmer state of mind than he could have believed possible, from the mood in which he had gone to the Hall. George's absence had been a great relief to him; and Mrs. Gordon had been so surrounded by admiring worshippers, that there had been no necessity for him to swell their number. He had paid her the needful courtesies that she could claim as an old acquaintance, but further than that he had refrained from going. He had also avoided the seductions of the wine-cup and of the gaming-table, to which, in seasons of depression, he had formerly had recourse.

Philip saw nothing of Blanche during the following week. He had avoided meeting her, and she was watchful to keep out of his way. He pursued his work with a heavy heart, but with untiring energy, down to its minutest details. No cross in his outward lot, or weight of gloom within his mind, was allowed as a pretext for relaxation with respect to his daily duties. All must be performed to the last iota; and until that was done, there must be no rest either for wearied frame or over-wrought mind.

CHAPTER II.

COUNSEL.

‘Never light and shade
Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale
Across the face of Enid, hearing her.’

TENNYSON.

ON the Monday morning Harry was deputed by his mother to tell Blanche to be ready to go for a drive with her in half-an-hour. Harry this time took his way straight down the Walks, instead of going for his friend. In the first place, he had no time to lose, as he was on his way to the office, where his services were required for a short time; and in the next place, he knew that Tom would not go with him—that injured individual having made a vow, since the disastrous termination of his last visit there, that he would not enter either the house or the

garden of No. 3, Victoria Terrace, if he could help it, for a long time to come. Harry, having delivered his message, and finished his allotted task, and having met Philip riding down the street, marched boldly into the surgery to see whether Tom was disengaged. On finding him still busy, Harry went away, with a request to his friend to follow him as soon as convenient, an invitation of which Master Tom was not slow to avail himself.

Mrs. Mansfield called for her niece at the appointed time, and Blanche enjoyed her drive immensely. The weather, which had been cold and wet, had undergone a change that produced a delightful exhilaration of the spirits. The day was one which seemed to have borrowed a charm not only from the preceding, but also from the succeeding season, for while it was invested with the lingering graces of the autumn, it forestalled the joyous brightness of the spring. The brilliant sunshine brought into vivid contrast the glossy green of the hollies and the dark hue of the fir-trees, with the rich tint of the bracken and the scarlet fruit of the wild rose, while the birch hung forth its graceful tassels, and the woodbine unfolded its tender leaves. The nimble squirrels ran with extended tail along the branches overhead; the copses

rang with the music of the thrush; and the young lambs frisked among the hollows of the downs.

They had made a few pleasant calls on country friends, and were returning towards the town, when Philip dashed round the corner of a lane in a somewhat reckless fashion, startling both Mrs. Mansfield and Blanche by his sudden appearance, causing the cheek of the one to grow pale, while that of the other became suffused with a momentary flush. Philip reined up his horse so suddenly that he threw it upon its haunches. He hastened to apologise to Mrs. Mansfield, and, after a few minutes' conversation, he cantered rapidly away, thereby exciting Mrs. Mansfield's pony to such a degree that Blanche had some difficulty in holding it in. It was impossible to judge exactly what kind of mood he was in. There was a dash and hurry in his manner that might be a cover for either feeling or for temper, and Blanche was puzzled to which to give the preference. Her meditations were interrupted by her aunt.

'I don't quite understand that young man, Blanche,' she said. 'He is a strange mixture of ill-temper and of kindliness. There is something that is pleasant about him, and there is also something that repels one.'

‘I have been struck with the same thing, aunt,’ replied Blanche. ‘But I don’t think that he tries to appear better than he is.’

‘He has no need to be more unamiable than he appears, I am sure,’ returned Mrs. Mansfield.

They soon arrived at home, where they found George just returned from a journey; and Mrs. Mansfield being called out of the room by a visitor, the cousins were left together. Blanche went to the window, and George came and stood beside her.

‘I think you must be aware, Blanche,’ he said, ‘how much my affections are centred in you.’

‘I have always loved you and Stanton as cousins, George,’ she replied.

‘But, Blanche, the happiness of my life is bound up in you.’

‘George, I am sorry; but you must not encourage any such feeling.’

George had been expecting this, but he was not any the more pleased on that account.

‘But, Blanche, I have always considered that there was a kind of engagement between us.’

‘You had no right to do that, George,’ she answered.

‘I certainly relied upon your affection,’ he continued; ‘and I thought that you regarded

me with more than cousinly love. I also felt sure that you knew of my feelings.'

'I believed that I had shown you, George,' replied Blanche, 'that I did not wish to encourage such ideas.'

'I did not attempt to urge you,' he resumed, 'because I thought that your reticence towards me was the result of that maidenly reserve which forms so beautiful a trait in your character. I have thought lately, Blanche, that I have a rival in your affections.'

'No, George,' she answered, while the colour deepened on her cheek.

'It would grieve me deeply,' continued her cousin, in a somewhat unsteady voice, 'to think that your happiness was likely to be entrusted to a man like Lyndon. You don't know what he is, Blanche.'

George felt, at that moment, that it would be unendurable, not only to see Philip succeed where he had failed, but also to see him in the enjoyment of the fortune that Blanche would be entitled to when she should be of age, and of which he had the management as his father's successor in the business. He hoped, however, that there was no serious danger of such a catastrophe; but he had a kind of instinctive feeling, that if Lyndon had not come into the neigh-

bourhood, Blanche would have consented to become his bride.

His cousin, in the meantime, was occupied with much the same course of thought. She felt how cold and pale was George's affection beside that of Philip; and she was wondering whether, had she never seen the latter gentleman, she should have agreed to an engagement with her cousin, and should have been satisfied with his affection.

‘Blanche,’ said George, after a pause, ‘I will endeavour not to annoy you with the expression of my love for you; but I shall still cherish a hope that is dear to me, and that I cannot willingly relinquish.’

Before Blanche had time to answer this speech, Mrs. Mansfield entered the room and George left it. Blanche sat down on the ottoman which was in front of the window, and her aunt on a low chair near it. Mrs. Mansfield's womanly instinct told her that something unusual had occurred; but as she glanced at her niece's face she was puzzled by its expression. There was nothing in it of the flutter of the tender joy and new-born hope which quiver in the consummation of the first sweet vows of love; but instead of that, there was a kind of sad regret, and a look as if the heart had been

stirred, but not by the touch of happiness. Both of them were silent for a minute or two, and then Blanche told her aunt what had taken place.

‘But how was it, my dear, that you refused him?’ asked Mrs. Mansfield, sorrowfully.

‘Because I know that I could never feel for him as a wife should,’ was the reply.

‘But, Blanche, I am sure he is very much attached to you, and I don’t think that you need have been afraid; but perhaps, after a time, you will think differently.’

Blanche shook her head.

‘I hope that Mr. Lyndon has had nothing to do with this, Blanche,’ said her aunt.

Blanche was silent, and the colour varied on her cheek.

‘Surely you are not attached to him?’ asked Mrs. Mansfield, in some consternation.

‘No, aunt,’ was the reply.

‘You are interested in him.’

‘I am certainly interested in him,’ answered Blanche.

Mrs. Mansfield mused. She felt very uncomfortable in regard to this avowal of her niece.

‘What has passed between you and him?’ she asked.

‘I have refused him.’

‘And he hopes that you will relent?’

‘He wishes it; I don’t know whether he hopes, I am sure,’ said Blanche, as she recalled to mind their last interview.

‘You remember what George said about him,’ resumed her aunt. ‘I must ask him for further particulars, for we ought to know what Mr. Lyndon is.’

‘You need not ask,’ said Blanche, the colour fading from her cheek, ‘for he has told me himself.’

‘Blanche!’ cried her aunt, in extreme surprise and consternation. ‘He has told you, did you say?’

‘Yes. He said that he did not wish me to think him either better or worse than he was.’

‘That was honest, at any rate. But what did he tell you?’

‘Nay,’ answered Blanche, ‘I cannot repeat it. You must not ask me, aunt.’

‘Blanche!’ exclaimed Mrs. Mansfield. ‘He had no right to ask that of you, and you ought not to have become the confidante of his secrets. You did very wrong to listen to him.’

Blanche was silent, and the tears came into her eyes.

‘How came he to talk of such things?’

Blanche had been looking at the matter from quite a different point of view from that which it presented to Mrs. Mansfield. She felt very much distressed at her aunt's words, and still more at the alarm and annoyance which her manner had indicated.

‘Did he ask you not to tell any one?’

‘Not exactly.’

‘What did he say, then?’

Blanche could not very well say that Stanton might be told when the time came at which she would give Philip permission to hope. The full realisation of all the perplexities and difficulties involved in her intercourse with him came upon her all at once; and she burst into tears. Mrs. Mansfield felt very much alarmed, and a little irritated, at this evidence of her niece's emotion. She tried in vain to soothe Blanche, who wept unrestrainedly for a few minutes.

‘My dear Blanche, do be calm! It is very wrong of Mr. Lyndon, very wrong indeed.’

At this moment Harry's ball, making a wide detour from its intended course, came flying towards the window; it struck the sill, and bounded back again, being caught by Tom, who had pursued it in hot haste, and had

vanished again almost before the startled inmates had time to raise their heads.

‘Those Lyndons are always frightening one in some way or other,’ said Mrs. Mansfield, a little impatiently.

Blanche dried her eyes, and there was a short silence, which was broken by Mrs. Mansfield.

‘You have done quite right to tell me, my dear child,’ she said, ‘and I don’t wish to be harsh with you, but it seems to me that you have been a little foolish.’

‘I am afraid I have,’ was the reply, ‘and, aunt, I want you to counsel me in this, if you will promise not to be shocked.’

‘I will not be more shocked than I can help, my dear. I wish very much to know exactly how it is between you and Mr. Lyndon.’

‘He wished me to relent so far as to consent to give him hope if he could become what I should wish,’ answered Blanche, ‘for he guessed partly what was the reason that I refused to listen to him.’

‘You did not agree, I hope.’

‘No, I did not. But he seemed so unhappy that I could not be unkind to him.’

Mrs. Mansfield shook her head.

‘In such a case, Blanche,’ she said, ‘the

shortest answer is the most merciful. How did he take it ?

‘He seemed as if he could not take a refusal.’

‘Then he has teased you, I am afraid.’

‘Well, he has annoyed me rather, but I felt very sorry for him,’ said Blanche. ‘He seemed as if he had something on his mind that he must tell me,’ she continued, in a low tone ; ‘and one evening, when he came to see Reginald, he did tell me.’

‘What did you say to him ?’

‘I had not much time to say anything, for Stanton came in.’

‘And since ?’

‘I have seen very little of him since, and I offended him the last time that we spoke together.’

‘That is quite as well,’ observed Mrs. Mansfield. ‘I hope that he will keep offended.’

‘He will not do that long,’ said Blanche, with a sigh. ‘I don’t know that I exactly wish it, either,’ she added, ‘for I know that he is suffering.’

‘They who sin must suffer, Blanche.’

‘But there should come a time when that suffering might cease.’

‘Oh, Blanche ! Blanche ! I am afraid that you are getting on dangerous ground.’

‘Well, aunt, it might happen to be the turning-point in his life, and I do not wish to have it on my conscience if he should go wrong.’

‘Many a one has reasoned in that way, and has sacrificed life and happiness, and all for nothing.’

‘I do not wish to be rash, but I cannot be harsh to him, aunt.’

Mrs. Mansfield mused for some time in great perplexity. Her judgment condemned Philip utterly, and yet she felt not unkindly towards him; but it was quite repugnant to her feelings that Blanche should be the one to whom he should turn for sympathy.

‘It is a very strange affair, Blanche,’ she said, ‘and I think that, considering the circumstances, it was rather impudent of Mr. Lyndon to act as he has done.’

‘His being so unhappy, aunt, must be held as a little excuse for him.’

‘He ought to be willing to be unhappy for a time, at least, till he has proved the sincerity of his repentance; but he seems to have begun showing that in a rather peculiar fashion.’

‘That made me doubt him,’ Blanche answered, ‘but I think that his penitence is real, nevertheless.’

‘Perhaps he is penitent for past sins, when

he finds that they prevent him from obtaining what he wishes.'

'No, aunt, I don't think that.'

'I am afraid you think too favourably of him, my dear.'

'I don't think I do, aunt; I want to ask you what course I ought to pursue.'

'I should advise you to have nothing to say to him at all,' replied Mrs. Mansfield. 'You must be aware, Blanche, that if you allow any intercourse of that kind, you cannot afterwards draw back without very good reason.'

'I should not wish to do that,' replied Blanche, ingenuously.

'And yet you say that you are not attached to him.'

'I could be, if he were to become such as we could approve.'

'That is a distinction without a difference, I am afraid,' replied her aunt, by whom Blanche's glowing cheek, and the kind of tender light that quivered over her face, did not pass unnoticed. 'I shall never approve, Blanche, of one whose past life has been such as you indicate.'

'And yet,' pleaded Blanche, 'there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety and nine who need no repentance.'

‘But we have no evidence that this repentance, in which you put so much faith, is a genuine and lasting one.’

‘Of course, he would have a long probation,’ remarked Blanche.

‘I see you have settled it all in your own mind, Blanche.’

‘No, aunt, I have not,’ replied Blanche, blushing; ‘I was only thinking of what might happen.’

‘I am very sorry for George,’ said his mother. ‘He does not make much ado about his feelings—like some one else; but they may be quite as deep, nevertheless. The brawling stream makes more noise than the deep river, Blanche.’

‘I am sorry to give George any pain, aunt; but if I cannot love him, it is of no use agreeing to an engagement.’

‘Certainly not, my dear. With regard to Mr. Lyndon, Blanche, I should advise you to keep out of his way as much as possible; and when you see him, be careful not to show him any favour. Keep him at a distance, for he seems to be one of those who, if you give him an inch, will take an ell. But don’t be over-anxious about this matter, and if you are in any perplexity, my dear child, be quite sure to

come to me, and I will give you the best advice that I can. A way out of these difficulties will be found for you somehow. You must be content to follow the leading of One who is wiser than we are, whether it be to joy or to sorrow. In the meantime, don't be cast down, but keep your spirits calm and even.'

Mrs. Mansfield kissed her niece affectionately, and Blanche clung to her for a few moments in that deep love which needs no words to express its meaning.

'Aunt,' she said, after a pause, 'I think that it would be a good thing if Stanton would be a little more friendly with him. It does not give him a chance, if he is too much shunned; and Stanton would be able to judge, too, of how sincere is his repentance.'

'There's something in that,' replied Mrs. Mansfield. 'I will talk to Stanton about it.'

'Both he and Reginald have been at me about Mr. Lyndon,' continued Blanche; 'so that I do not wish to recur to the subject with either of them; and I would rather that nothing were said about it to George, who would naturally view him with some feeling; besides, I have a suspicion that George would make Mr. Lyndon's character appear in the worst light that he could.'

‘I think that you are unjust to George,’ replied Mrs. Mansfield. ‘I don’t believe that he would willingly do Mr. Lyndon an injury, though he may be prejudiced against him, from what he has heard, which, after all, may be exaggerated.’

Blanche felt very much comforted by this conversation with her aunt, who, she thought, was as favourable to Philip as could have been possibly expected. She was quite lively at dinner; but George was decidedly in a sentimental mood. Blanche hoped that Stanton or Harry would go home with her, but they both naturally left it to George, who, however, did not recur to the subject of their morning conversation.

As soon as they were gone, Mrs. Mansfield sent Harry into another room, and she then told Stanton as much as she thought it was desirable for him to know of what had passed between herself and Blanche. Stanton took it more seriously than she expected.

‘I don’t know what are the facts to which George referred,’ he said. ‘I asked him only a few days since, and he said that he would rather not tell me; for that, if it got about that it had come from him, he should be in a mess. But he said that he was quite sure that

what he had heard was true. I don't see,' added Stanton, 'how my being more friendly with Lyndon would mend matters, for it would give him more opportunities of seeing Blanche; and as to his character, I am pretty well convinced as to what that is.'

'Let me hear what is your judgment of him,' said Mrs. Mansfield.

'Well, I don't think that he is exactly what one would call bad-hearted,' he replied. 'He has generous impulses with considerable kindness of disposition, and I believe that he is straightforward, after a fashion——'

'I was going to say that that was not at all a bad character,' interrupted Mrs. Mansfield, 'till you said "after a fashion."'

'Then, on the other hand,' continued her son, 'he is a man of strong passions, which, I imagine, he follows instead of mastering. He is, as you know, violent and determined; also, I am afraid, unscrupulous. He looks at life, too, I feel sure, from a low moral standpoint, which is, perhaps, really the most unfavourable thing about him. I expect the moral atmosphere of his home has been anything but a pure one, which accounts for much that is objectionable in him; and though he is not to blame for that, still it does not alter the fact of his

being a very undesirable connection for Blanche.'

'I hope, my dear Stanton, that it will not come to that.'

'We must take care that it does not, then.'

'I thought it wise not to be severe with Blanche about it,' said Mrs. Mansfield, 'as that would naturally dispose her to look upon him with favour.'

'From contrariness, I suppose?'

'No, not from that, but from excusable sympathy with one whom we, unjustifiably, as she would think, denounce and shun.'

'Well, I don't know,' he answered, 'I should have insisted on her throwing him overboard at once.'

'It will be much better for it to come about without my interference,' replied his mother.

'But is that likely?' asked Stanton. 'I remember my father telling me once about an old servant of his mother's; on his asking her how it was that she came to have such a bad husband, she said that he was so tiresome, she was obliged to marry him to get rid of him.'

'A very bad receipt, that,' said Mrs. Mansfield.

'So I thought; and I am afraid, if Blanche does not take more decided measures with

Lyndon, that he will try to make her do the same.'

'I think she has a little more sense than that, Stanton.'

'Well, I don't know. My opinion of Blanche's sense has been rather shaken lately.'

CHAPTER III.

A GLEAM OF HOPE.

‘And said to his own heart, “She weeps for me.”’

Geraint and Enid.

WHEN Philip returned from his ride, he went to the surgery, where he found Tom swinging about his legs to get rid of the energy which he had been vainly trying to put into his studies. Down went his book upon the floor as his brother set him something to do. Tom went on with his work in silence for a few minutes, and then he observed :

‘I don’t know whether Mrs. Mansfield had been scolding Miss Ainslie this morning when I was there, but she was crying.’

‘Crying!’ repeated Philip, with a sudden light in his eyes. ‘How do you know?’

‘Why, you see,’ said Tom, ‘Harry’s ball

went right up against the window, and I rushed after it, for I was afraid that it would break the glass. However, it didn't, but bounced back again. They were sitting at the window, and I saw them quite plainly; Mrs. Mansfield was saying something, and I heard the word "Lyndon."

'Did you hear any more?' asked Philip, eagerly.

'No, for you may be sure I scuttled away as fast as I could when I had got the ball. I was gone almost before they saw me, I think.'

'You are sure she was crying?'

'Well, she was mopping her eyes, at any rate; and when a fellow mops his eyes he is generally considered to be crying.'

Philip sat with his pen suspended in his hand. What could be the meaning of this incident? That Miss Ainslie's distress had some reference to him there seemed to be no doubt. That he was capable of exciting such emotion in her breast gave him a feeling of exquisite pleasure; for it assured him, that, however cold she might be in manner, she could not be so indifferent to him as she seemed.

What could Mrs. Mansfield have been saying? Could Blanche have told her? The thought banished the colour from Philip's cheek,

and brought the cold drops of perspiration on his forehead. Surely Blanche would not betray him. Upon reflection, he decided that this was impossible ; and that conviction brought a sigh of relief, which did not escape the ear of Master Tom, who was not too busy to notice what was passing near him.

Philip was obliged to come to the conclusion that whatever were the words that had produced in Miss Ainslie the signs of trouble Tom had witnessed, most probably they were to his disadvantage. He felt an intense desire to know what had passed, for it was almost sure to be something that would seriously affect his position with regard to Blanche—which might even lead to his banishment, not only from Mrs. Mansfield's, but also from Victoria Terrace. It would be useless, however, to question Tom any further, he having evidently put his brother in possession of all he knew. The best course to be pursued, Philip thought, was to keep his eyes open, and to be as reticent as possible in manner to Miss Ainslie, until he should be able to feel his position. He determined to see her, however, and to judge, as far as he had an opportunity, what course had been decided upon with regard to himself.

During that week Philip was indefatigable

in going down the Walks at all hours of the day, when there was any chance of Miss Ainslie being abroad; but he met no one except Mr. Ainslie or the Mansfields. In vain he contrived to be walking past the school when the class dispersed; the curate came out alone, and also alone he returned from the evening service. It was plain that Blanche must be either out, or ill; and Philip ransacked his brain to find the means of discovering which without asking, for that he did not like to do.

Blanche had, indeed, gone to the house of a friend in the country for a few days' visit, but this Philip had no means of knowing. He thought it possible that she might have been sent away, with the object of separating her from him, and of weakening any influence which it might be thought that he had gained over her. He resolved, that, if he did not soon see or hear of her, he would inquire of Stanton, and come to some definite understanding. This step, however, he shrank from taking until some of the difficulties by which he was beset should either have cleared away, or have assumed some more tangible shape, which latter seemed to be much the more likely of the two. He felt that it would be dishonourable to Blanche to go on in the present unsatisfactory

manner for any length of time ; but he wished, unless circumstances should force him to do otherwise, to defer taking any very important step for the present. Blanche, he felt, could not yet have much confidence in him, and any premature movement on his part might precipitate the catastrophe which he was so anxious to avoid.

Towards the end of the week he heard from Tom that Miss Ainslie was gone out, and he consequently ceased to look for her, and rode or walked about wrapped in his own gloomy reflections.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SERMON.

‘ ———The averted cheek in loneliest dell
Is conscious of a gaze it cannot bear ;
The leaves that rustle near us seem to tell
Our heart's sad secret to the silent air.’

KEBLE.

ON Sunday evening Philip bent his steps towards the church, not this time with any hope of seeing Blanche. The Mansfields were all there, and Mrs. Mansfield was sitting where Philip had a good view of her. He regarded her attentively from that point of view in which, just now, he was so much interested.

Hers was a frank, good-tempered face, with that expression in it of quiet simplicity which also gave a charm to the countenances of her two younger sons, but in which that of George was, as Philip thought, conspicuously deficient.

Mrs. Mansfield's face indicated a nature in which good sense, warm affections, and a firm but gentle kindness were the distinguishing characteristics.

Philip was trying to form some estimate of how leniently she was likely to judge him in regard to his relations with Blanche, when she looked up, and was rather surprised to find a pair of dark eyes fixed upon her with such intent scrutiny. Philip glanced away directly, but his gaze had been so earnest and inquiring, and at the same time so full of feeling, that Mrs. Mansfield had no difficulty in interpreting its meaning; and the expression of character which it afforded also gave her the key to the interest which Philip had awakened in her niece's bosom.

The next instant there was a soft silken rustle, and Blanche entered the pew. A sense of deep and exquisite delight diffused itself through Philip's heart at her unexpected presence.

The service commenced. It was Reginald's first appearance after his illness, and every one seemed pleased to see him again in his accustomed place. His sermon was from the text, 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' It was a searching appeal, well wrought out, on the

evils of sin ; on the pollution which it brings to the heart and life ; on its contagion in the home, and the baneful influence which it spreads around. Reginald then dwelt on the various ways in which sin comes home to him who has committed it, either in the gradual deadening of the heart till every good impulse and kindly affection has become choked by selfishness and passion, or else in the tortures of the awakened conscience, whose fires scorch the heart with an agony for which there is no earthly balm, and to which no other trouble can be compared.

Mrs. Mansfield could not help glancing occasionally at Philip during the delivery of this sermon ; but as he sat with his head slightly bowed, so that the light did not fall upon his face, she could not judge of its expression. She could see, however, by the varying colour and the look of pain on Blanche's countenance, how much she felt for him.

As soon as the service was over, Philip was gone, almost before the others had raised their heads after the benediction. George gave his mother his arm, Stanton followed with Blanche, while Harry lingered a moment to link his arm in that of Tom, and Fanny joined Miss Scott. Philip alone had hurried away, shunning alike the kindly greeting of a friend and a neighbour's

passing courtesy. He had listened to the curate's sermon with feelings which even Blanche's sympathy had failed to realise, and which, as Reginald proceeded, became almost unendurable. A kind of fierce remorse, mingled with anger at the curate for the pain which he made him suffer, took possession of him, as each sentence, which seemed pointed at him alone, sought out with well-directed aim the tenderest part of the wound that rankled in his bosom. But this mood was effectually rebuked by the gentle presence of one so near him, and Philip sat listening with resolute endurance to what seemed to him the curate's cruel words, with his head bowed in bitter humiliation ; his feeling of Blanche's sympathy soon becoming lost in the overwhelming sense of his own grief and shame. He hurried from the church to hide himself in darkness and solitude from every human eye, and sought the most secluded part of the Walks near the water meadows, where, after dark, a footstep was seldom heard. He walked up and down until the calm and stillness of the night had allayed the fever of his spirit. The winter sky was bright and clear, and through the bare branches of the trees the stars looked down on him in their sweet radiance from the far-off depths of ether. At length, to

his sorrowing heart there seemed to come a whisper from the Infinite One, bringing him the assurance that his sighs of penitence were not unheard, and that the strivings of his spirit for purity and strength were accepted by Him who knows how frail His children are.

CHAPTER V.

CRITICISM.

‘Wouldst thou the life of souls discern?
Nor human wisdom nor divine
Helps thee by aught beside to learn;
Love is life’s only sign.’

KEBLE.

WHEN the Mansfields reached home on their return from church, Tom asked if Harry might go with him for a little while, as there was nobody at home; but Stanton suggested that Tom had better come in there for half an hour.

‘Fanny is gone with Miss Scott,’ continued Tom, when they had got into the drawing-room; ‘and Phil went off in such a hurry. I expect he is gone after his fever patients.’

‘I wonder he is not afraid of catching it,’ said Harry.

‘What’s the good of being afraid?’ asked

Tom. 'Besides, if he is to catch it, he will catch it.'

'That's not a very scientific statement,' observed Stanton.

'Is that the way in which your brother teaches you?' asked George.

'Well, I mean to say that if he is in a state to catch it, he will; and if he isn't, he won't.'

'That's a little better,' said Stanton.

'And what is being in a state to catch the fever?' asked George; 'because we had better avoid that, if you can tell us how.'

'Oh, when one is very weak,' replied Tom, who was a little doubtful whether George was making fun of him or not; 'and when people stay out at night, and all that.'

'Well, your brother stays out at night, does he not?'

'Yes, but *that's* not what I mean. Phil goes out, of course, when he has to go out. He stayed up almost all last night with our groom's little boy.'

'Is the child better?' asked Mrs. Mansfield, smiling.

'Oh yes. Phil says he'll do now, if they are careful.'

'I suppose they'll catch it, if they ain't,' said Harry.

‘I expect they will,’ was the reply. ‘But Phil looks after them pretty sharply, I can tell you.’

When Tom discovered, by the clock on the mantelshelf, that the half-hour that Stanton had mentioned had passed, he jumped up, and after saying ‘Good-night,’ he marched off home. Reginald then mentioned several instances which had lately come to his knowledge of Philip’s kindness of heart, and of his unremitting attention to even the lowest and most destitute of his patients. He seemed to have exercised more judgment and discretion in dealing with that portion of the community than the curate expected. George attempted to qualify his cousin’s encomiums by saying that Lyndon was thoroughly devoted to his profession as a business, and that he had sense enough to know what was the best way of building up a practice, and of getting that kind of reputation which was essential in the popular estimation to the character of a good surgeon.

‘Nay, George, that is not fair,’ replied Reginald. ‘I am not very fond of young Lyndon, but he ought to have his due. I am very willing to give him credit for the good qualities which he does possess. If his energy had been chastened and turned to good account,

he might have done a great deal of useful work in the world.'

'I think the work of a surgeon might be made as noble as that of a clergyman,' observed Stanton.

'Might be,' remarked George.

'Nay, Stanton, that is going too far,' replied Reginald. 'There is necessarily a great deal that is merely worldly in the surgeon's work. He has to mix with the very lowest of the people, with the object merely of relieving their bodily suffering. When the clergyman visits such, it is to heal the diseases of their souls, and he is blessed in so doing.'

'There is a good deal in that, I think,' remarked Mrs. Mansfield.

'One can hardly imagine a man of such a profession,' continued the curate, 'attaining to the highest ideal of a true saintly life; though I will not say that it is impossible, because everything is possible to the Spirit of God.'

'Lyndon is not likely to illustrate the possibility, at any rate,' observed George.

'No,' replied Stanton. 'What virtues he has, seem to be of a truly human type.'

'I am afraid there is not much about him that does not pertain to the natural man,' remarked the curate. 'He belongs to that stamp

of character with which I have scarcely anything in common, and with which, also, I have very little sympathy; so that I have not much chance of influencing him, for it is by the power of sympathy, after all, I believe, that good influences most frequently effect their work.'

Reginald, as he spoke these words, became aware, by the glances that were exchanged between Stanton and his mother, and by the glow which came on his sister's cheek, that he had said something which touched upon delicate ground. George, who happened to be turning over the pages of a magazine, and Harry, who was getting sleepy, had not, fortunately, noticed what had passed.

Reginald, at this moment, discovered that it was time to go home. He said that he must not venture to trespass at present in the matter of late hours.

'Or you will come under Tom's definition of the persons who are likely to be in a fit state to catch the fever,' observed Stanton, laughing.

Blanche had listened to this conversation with mingled feelings. She was glad to hear Reginald's testimony to the undeniable virtues that Philip possessed; but the qualifications that were mingled with the praise pained her, though her judgment told her that they were not alto-

gether undeserved by him. She felt considerably annoyed with George for the part which he had taken, and she thought that Stanton might have spoken of Philip with a little more friendliness of tone. She could not help wondering, as she tripped homeward by her brother's side, whether the coming years would bring with them revelations that would degrade Philip still more in the estimation of the circle towards which she knew he cast such longing eyes ; or whether, by force of will, and a steady perseverance in the path of virtue, he would win esteem and confidence at last. A quivering hope and a haunting fear contended for the mastery within her bosom. Which of the two held the true promise of the future she could not guess.

CHAPTER VI.

A MORNING CALL.

‘In what thou sayst,
Hast thou a hidden meaning?’

ANON.

THE next morning Philip was later than usual before he went into the country. He was walking round the garden, waiting for his horse, looking at the early snowdrops, when he encountered Tom, who was also proceeding round the garden, though in a somewhat laborious fashion, by standing still for a minute, swinging his arms violently the while, and then taking a sudden leap. Philip gathered a few snowdrops, thinking how much they resembled Blanche in her gentle purity, when Tom suddenly asked :

‘Have you made out, yet, what Miss Ainslie was crying about?’

‘How can I find that out, you monkey?’

‘Well, I thought you were studying it for a long time the other day.’

Tom, having made this audacious speech, set off towards the gate. Philip instantly gave chase. He had nearly overtaken him, and was making a short cut by leaping over a border, when Mrs. Mansfield and Miss Ainslie came through the gate. Tom dodged behind the two ladies, raising his cap as he did so, but not stopping to speak, with such an expression of roguish merriment in his face, that neither Mrs. Mansfield nor Blanche could help smiling.

‘We came just in time, it seems,’ said Mrs. Mansfield, as she shook hands with Philip, and Tom dashed through the gate.

‘I don’t think that he was much frightened,’ replied Philip, as he stooped to pick up the snowdrops which he had let fall in the pursuit.

It certainly would have required a great stretch of the imagination for any one to fancy that the least countenance could be given to such an idea by Tom’s laughing face.

‘He is such a mischievous monkey,’ continued Philip, with an expression in his face, half of annoyance and half of amusement. ‘I wish he were as sober as Harry.’

‘Harry has not been quite so steady since he came,’ replied Mrs. Mansfield.

‘That sort of thing is very catching among boys,’ was the reply. ‘It is almost as bad as the scarlet fever. I will give Tom a little advice on the subject, with your compliments, if you wish.’

‘Oh, never mind; I do not think that he will do Harry any harm,’ answered Mrs. Mansfield, as they went into the house.

‘Well, I hope not,’ said Philip. ‘I am sure that Harry has a very good influence over him; but if he causes you any annoyance, I hope that you will not hesitate to let me know, or to reprove him yourself if you wish.’

On inquiry it was discovered that Fanny was out, and that Mr. Lyndon was not yet downstairs. Mrs. Mansfield said that they would call another day, when they hoped to find Miss Lyndon at home; on which Philip pressed them to rest and take a glass of wine. Mrs. Mansfield, however, declined the invitation saying that, as they had come such a short distance, nothing of the kind was necessary. Philip was disappointed, but he consoled himself by attending the ladies through the garden, though, as Mrs. Mansfield saw, his horse was waiting. He had, however, a very good

excuse in wishing to inquire about a boy who had lived at Mrs. Mansfield's, and whom he had an idea of engaging instead of the one he had, who thought that he was getting too old for his situation.

'I cannot advise you to have him,' Mrs. Mansfield said, in answer to his questions. 'We had endless trouble with him.'

'We were obliged to turn him out of the Sunday-school, I am sorry to say,' remarked Blanche; 'but still I think there is some good in him, if we could only get the right way to find it out.'

'I don't think we were strict enough with him at our house,' said Mrs. Mansfield.

'I have half a mind to try him, and give him another chance,' said Philip, glancing at Blanche.

'Do you generally incline to the side of mercy,' Mr. Lyndon? inquired Mrs. Mansfield.

'Not always, I am afraid,' he replied. 'Though I suppose one ought to do.'

'That depends upon circumstances. Too great leniency, Mr. Lyndon, is often more injurious in its consequences than we imagine.'

'I should scarcely expect a harsh judgment from you, Mrs. Mansfield.'

‘Not a harsh one, I hope,’ she replied, ‘but a just one.’

‘Bare justice is harsh, sometimes,’ he said. ‘However, I’ll take him on trial for a month, and if he will not do he must go.’

Mrs. Mansfield could not help thinking that, as Philip took his leave, he glanced at her as if he could not quite make out whether or not there had been any covert meaning in what she had been saying.

Philip saw very little of the Mansfields during the following fortnight. He never went to the house except in his professional capacity. Even when Stanton had seemed the most friendly, Philip had never felt that their acquaintance had been close enough for him to make a friendly call; and he had felt latterly, occasionally to a painful degree, something of ‘Stand off’ in Stanton’s manner, which made it impossible to seek his society, as, from the fact of Stanton’s being Blanche’s cousin, he would willingly have done. Animated by the new hope which Tom’s report had infused into his mind, Philip, had he been guided by the impulse of his own impetuous nature, would have followed up his quest with all the ardour that characterised his love; but various considerations held him back. There was the

hostility of George Mansfield and Mrs. Gordon on the one hand, and on the other the scarcely concealed repugnance of the curate, and the distrust with which Stanton and Mrs. Mansfield regarded him. Neither had he forgotten the last conversation that he had had with Blanche, which had so much depressed him, and which made him fear any recurrence to the subject. He was extremely anxious not to complicate the situation by too great haste, and he renewed his oft-repeated resolutions to exercise reticence and caution—resolutions that had always given way sooner or later before the irresistible impulse not to let slip some favourable opportunity, which might never occur again, of urging his suit with advantage. Fortunately for the maintenance of these resolutions, Philip seemed likely to see little of Blanche. When she went to or from the church or the school, she was invariably accompanied by her brother or her cousins; in her drives or walks, either Mrs. Mansfield or one of the others was with her; and when she rode out with Fanny, George was sure to be their cavalier. The only time that she appeared to be alone was during her district visiting, and that presented no favourable opportunity for private conversation, though many for a passing courtesy or an ex-

change of greeting—even occasionally for a few minutes' consultation about some sick child, or aged or afflicted man or woman. From the frequency of these rencounters, Blanche began to suspect that Philip had discovered what was the time which she usually allotted to her district visiting, and that he had also gone through some calculation as to the particular part of the week when she was likely to be in certain parts of the town. She accordingly varied her plan, sometimes in one way and sometimes in another, thus contriving, with considerable amusement and satisfaction, to baffle his most cunningly-devised efforts. She had been pleased to observe that in these meetings his manner had been uniformly marked by a gentleness and a self-restraint which she could not but respect. He was evidently desirous not to annoy her by a too demonstrative attention. The accounts which she heard of his care for and kindness to the sick, which were a source to her of the purest pleasure, were occasionally varied by some anecdote characteristic of his curt way of speaking, or of the sharpness with which, when his orders were not obeyed, he came down upon the culprit.

CHAPTER VII.

SKIRMISHING.

‘All his faults observed,
Set in a note-book, learned, and conned by rote,
To cast into my teeth.’

SHAKESPEARE.

‘ARE you going to Mrs. Scott’s party to-night?’ asked Fanny, one morning at breakfast.

‘Yes, I suppose so,’ he replied.

‘I might not only have “supposed so,” but have been quite sure, considering who is likely to be there,’ said Fanny.

Philip made no answer; but as soon as Tom was gone out of the room he said:

‘I wish you would not flirt so much with George Mansfield, Fanny.’

‘You told me that before, Philip.’

‘I might have spared myself the trouble, it seems.’

Fanny looked as if she thought that he might.

‘You don’t know what he is, Fanny.’

‘And I don’t care,’ she replied. ‘He is nothing to me.’

‘And Teddy Scott is nothing to you either, I suppose,’ observed Philip, a little sarcastically.

‘He is not,’ was the concise reply.

There was silence for a few minutes, which was broken by Philip.

‘Fanny,’ he said, ‘it would be very much better if you did not flirt so much.’

Fanny opened her eyes very wide, and looked at her brother with a little real, and a great deal of pretended, astonishment.

‘That is good advice from you, Philip,’ she said.

Philip’s brow darkened a little, though he made a strong effort to control his temper.

‘Well, Fanny, one looks at things from different points of view at different times,’ he replied.

‘You are turning over a new leaf, with a vengeance,’ remarked Fanny.

‘And I think that flirting is——’

‘Not quite like Miss Blanche Ainslie,’ interposed Fanny, as he hesitated for a word. ‘She is your model of perfection, now, I suppose; but if you expect me to be as demure as she is, you will make a very great mistake.’

‘I think I shall,’ he said, a little sharply.

‘The ladies are all to conform themselves to Miss Ainslie’s type, I suppose,’ continued Fanny — ‘for the present, at least, until she gives place to some other Miss or Mrs.’

‘Fanny!’ exclaimed her brother, angrily.

‘Are the gentlemen to take pattern by you?’ she asked.

‘I never said that, I am sure,’ he said.

‘Well, I think they had better not, unless Miss Blanche’s charms can effect a very wonderful transformation. She does not approve of flirting, I suppose, does she, Philip?’ she asked, as he did not speak.

‘I have not heard her say,’ he answered.

‘I told her that you were very fond of it.’

‘You did? you should not have done that. It was unkind.’

‘Well, I thought that you seemed to be smitten with her,’ replied Fanny, ‘and I thought that she might take it all for gospel. But if you have really given up flirting, I will tell her that, if you like.’

‘Don’t be silly, Fanny,’ said Philip, impatiently. ‘I desire that you say nothing about me, at all, to Miss Ainslie.’

‘I think that will be the best, decidedly,’ was the reply. ‘I will let your actions speak for

you, for, as somebody says, they speak a great deal louder than words.'

The Scotts were good-natured, empty-headed people, of some standing in the town as far as position went, but utterly uninfluential with regard to force of character or moral qualities, though it could not be alleged against them that they had been guilty of any glaring offence against the ordinary rules that regulate the conduct of society. They and the Mansfields had always been on friendly, but not very intimate, terms, there being no tie to bind them closely together, though the qualities of kindness and good-nature were characteristics common, more or less, to most of the members of both families. Young Scott was one of those gentlemen who think it necessary to be always in a state of flirtation, more or less mild, according to circumstances, with the young lady most suitable for that purpose in the neighbourhood: this happened at that time to be Miss Lyndon. Between Miss Scott and Fanny had sprung up one of those friendships which are as quick in growth as Jonah's gourd, and which, generally, are as rapid in decay. Fanny's vanity and love of society had both been gratified by the attention of the Scotts. She did not trouble herself about their deficiency in mental accomplishments

or in moral qualities. They were kind to her ; they amused her ; and they helped to pass away many an hour which, otherwise, would have been spent in tedious solitude.

Philip had had many skirmishes with his sister about her flirtation with Teddy Scott, but he was invariably worsted in the encounter, Fanny turning the tables upon him in such a manner that he was fain to let her have the last word. After this last ineffectual attempt, he comforted himself with reflecting, that his sister was not one to be unwarily entrapped into an engagement ; that she had a tolerably clear judgment, and was not deficient in common sense ; above all, that she did not adorn her friends with qualities which had no existence except in the regions of fancy.

Philip's acquaintance with the Scotts was of the flimsiest kind ; but that was quite enough to warrant the invitation to their party of a gentleman who was likely to take a high stand in the town as a professional man, and who, besides having a distinguished personal appearance, sang well, danced well, and was looked upon by the ladies as a desirable partner.

In the absorbing interest which had taken possession of Philip's mind, scenes of mere gaiety had no attraction for him. Their frivolity

seemed to mock the earnestness both of his love and of his penitence. He had studiously avoided all parties to which he had not felt obliged to go, except those at which he had a chance of meeting Blanche.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. SCOTT'S PARTY.

'Few were the words, and stern and high,
That marked the foemen's feudal hate;
For question fierce and proud reply
Gave signal soon of dire debate.'

SCOTT.

At the appointed time Philip accompanied his sister to Mrs. Scott's. They were rather early, for it was a rare thing for Fanny to be late when a party was in question; when it did happen, it was sure to have been because she had to wait for some one else. Philip saw at a glance that Blanche and the Mansfields were not there. George and Stanton, however, arrived soon after the Lyndons. Stanton shook hands with Philip, while George nodded rather patronisingly.

'I have heard some news of you, Lyndon,' he

said, as his brother turned away to speak to some one.

‘Indeed!’ asked Philip, suspiciously. ‘What is it?’

‘That you are engaged to my cousin.’

‘I have heard that of some one else,’ was the answer.

‘You do not deny that it is true?’ said George.

‘Yes, I do,’ replied Philip, bluntly. ‘I wish I could not,’ he thought.

‘Take care that it never is, Lyndon,’ said George, in a warning voice, ‘or it will be the worse for you.’

Philip’s dark eyes flashed a fierce defiance of George for a moment, but the next he restrained himself.

‘Mansfield,’ he said haughtily, in a low, deep tone, ‘you have no right to dictate what I shall do.’

‘I have the power, at any rate,’ replied George, tauntingly.

Fortunately, at this moment, some one spoke to George, and the defiance that trembled on Philip’s lip remained unspoken. George turned away, and the dancing commenced soon afterwards. Philip sat down away from the group that clustered round the fire. He did not heed the dancers; he had no interest in them. His

thoughts were busy with the menacing words that George had uttered ; he wanted to grasp their import, and to calculate how far the threat which they contained would be likely to be carried. He was sitting with clouded brow and eyes fixed upon the floor, his mind still occupied with these reflections, when he was roused by some one saying :

‘ Good-evening, Mr. Lyndon.’

It was Mrs. Mansfield’s voice. When she was in her best state of health, she generally spent an hour or two, on such occasions, at the houses of her friends, with the object of enjoying a little kindly intercourse, and of showing her sympathy with them in what she considered to be an innocent amusement.

‘ It reminds me of my early days, Mr. Lyndon,’ she remarked, ‘ to see these young people enjoying themselves.’

Philip looked at her with eyes so full of trouble that she felt rather startled.

‘ I used to enjoy these things as well as any one,’ he said ; ‘ but I don’t now.’

As he spoke, he glanced round the room in search of Blanche, thinking that she might have come with her aunt, which was indeed the case. She was talking to Mrs. Scott, not far off. So abstracted had been his attention during his

meditation on George's words, that he had not perceived her entrance.

‘Are you not fond of dancing?’

‘Yes, rather. But the time comes when the zest is gone from such things.’

‘Not at your age, surely,’ said Mrs. Mansfield, in some surprise.

‘I think that an evening spent in a home of one's own,’ he replied, ‘where one could find comfort and affection after the toils of the day were over, would be worth any number of such scenes as this.’

‘Such a home is what, I suppose, most persons picture as one of the desirable things of life,’ observed Mrs. Mansfield.

‘And which few realise,’ rejoined Philip.

‘I don't know that,’ she answered. ‘I have found it, and I hope that in the course of time my sons will do so too.’

‘But there are some who do not.’

‘In ordinary circumstances, I believe it is given to every one to obtain it if he will.’

‘But what of those who do not choose it until the power of choice is taken from them?’

‘Oh, I cannot find answers for all sorts of imaginary cases,’ replied Mrs. Mansfield. ‘They who have turned away from the happiness that might have been theirs,’ she continued, ‘may

still win a peace which none can take away. The happiness that is found in the path of simple duty is not to be despised, Mr. Lyndon.'

He did not answer ; but Mrs. Mansfield could see, by the expression of his face, that the prospect which she had presented to him had, in his eyes, but a cold and cheerless aspect, and that his heart was set on something very different.

As Mrs. Mansfield remained silent, and Mrs. Scott was engaged with a fresh arrival, Philip went to speak to Blanche. She received him with a quiet dignity, which, coming after the annoyance that he had endured with George, irritated him, signifying, as it did, that she had made up her mind to keep him at a distance. He, however, asked for her hand for the following dance, which she did not refuse. He made no attempt at conversation upon any other than the most ordinary topics, and it was apparent to Blanche that he was not in a very genial humour. She did not try to win him to a happier mood, thinking that that proceeding would be giving him the inch which would, according to Mrs. Mansfield's prediction, lead to his taking the ell. Philip felt angry with himself that he could not enjoy this opportunity of being with Blanche, for which he had longed so

earnestly, and his vexation prevented him from dispelling the cloud which was over him.

When he conducted Blanche to a seat near Mrs. Mansfield, he found that Reginald had joined her, and was giving an account of a book which had been lately published. Turning to Philip, the curate asked his opinion of the work, and he gave it in a clear, decided way, that roused Reginald to take up the argument against him. The point at issue was, whether the Theory of Evolution were true or false, and if it were true, what would be its bearing on the question of Immortality? The discussion was keen and eager, occasionally even hot. All Reginald's prejudices and prepossessions were on the side of the old theory; he was horrified at the 'daring impiety,' as he termed it, of the modern men of science, who, as he said, knew not whither they were drifting, and believed in nothing but their own infallibility. He constantly shifted his position when he found it untenable, and where argument failed he had recourse to invective, terming his opponent a sceptic and an atheist. Philip, on the other hand, maintained his ground with unflinching tenacity. He defended his views with a logical clearness and strong grasp of the subject which were very telling. Stanton, who stood by

without taking part in the debate, could not but admire Philip's skill and ability, though he deprecated the conclusions at which he arrived.

Fanny, who came up on the arm of Teddy Scott just as the discussion reached its height, remarked to Blanche :

‘ I could not think what was the matter, your brother looked so energetic, but if it is only that I do not care. If they talk till Doomsday they'll never settle that question ; but gentlemen must have something to argue about.’

‘ Well, if such views as your brother's are held, it is better that they should come forth and be confuted,’ replied Blanche.

The confutation, however, did not seem to be so very easy. Reginald was evidently no match for Philip, and he was obliged to retire from the field with what dignity he could. Blanche, who had been dancing, missed most of the discussion, but she was rather shocked at the ruthless keenness with which Philip followed up his opponent, and pushed the argument to the last extremity.

It was a pleasant change when music was proposed, and Philip and his sister sang a duet in a style which elicited the warmest approbation of the audience. The part of the gentleman, who was fierce and tender by turns, was

admirably rendered by Philip ; while Fanny portrayed the coquetry and sparkling archness of the lady in a way that was inimitable. There was nothing positively objectionable in the song, but Stanton felt that he should not have liked Blanche to sing it, except in the privacy of the domestic circle.

Stanton danced little, and appeared to be content with watching the others. Philip seemed for a time to be of the same mind. He asked Blanche for the first dance after the duet, but she was engaged to George ; and Philip sat by Mrs. Mansfield and Stanton, silent, and apparently a little moody. When the dance was over, George came up with his partner, and Philip rose to give her his place.

‘ I hope, Mr. Lyndon,’ observed Mrs. Scott, who was on the other side of Mrs. Mansfield, ‘ that you will be able to stay all the evening, which I am told you very seldom do.’

‘ A surgeon is not altogether master of his own movements,’ he replied. ‘ He is obliged to bend to the force of circumstances.’

‘ I fancy that it may be rather convenient sometimes,’ suggested George, ‘ to remember that a visit to some patient or other is due.’

‘ When one is in disagreeable company it is, decidedly,’ said Philip.

‘We shall know, now, how to interpret such an incident,’ remarked Mrs. Scott.

‘It might happen without any such inference being justly deducible,’ said Philip.

‘It might happen, of course,’ she replied. ‘But it would, to say the least of it, look rather suspicious.’

‘Any one in the position of a surgeon,’ observed George, ‘possesses advantages which are denied to those in other professions.’

‘In what way do you mean?’ asked Stanton.

‘Well, he has means which are not available either to the lawyer or to the clergyman for obtaining the knowledge of family secrets, and his opportunities for the commission of crime are, when one comes to think about it, something extraordinary.’

‘You surely do not call that an advantage,’ said his mother.

‘I suppose it would be considered one by the man who wished for such opportunities,’ replied George. ‘The lives of your patients are, I suppose, often in your hands, Lyndon,’ he added, turning to the young surgeon.

‘Oh, yes,’ replied that gentleman, without finching. ‘If I wished, I dare say I could manage to poison one or two of them without its being suspected; that is, if the nature of the

disease were such as to admit of the necessary course of treatment.'

'Mr. Lyndon, what things you do say!' exclaimed Mrs. Scott. 'I think that we shall have to send for Mr. Wood.'

'I hope that my patients look upon me with a degree of confidence that will render such a step needless,' he replied.

'In other ways beside that of poison, your knowledge would, I suppose, enable you to obtain the same result,' resumed George.

'Yes, it would,' said Lyndon, quietly. 'Give me a favourable opportunity as regards time and place, and I could extinguish your life much more easily than you could mine.'

There was something in Lyndon's manner, calm as it was, that was rather peculiar, and not quite pleasant.

'Mr. Lyndon,' cried Mrs. Mansfield, 'I am shocked at you.'

'I am sorry, madam; but *I* did not choose the subject of the conversation,' he replied coolly.

As the music for the next dance was beginning to sound, George went to Miss Lyndon, and Philip turned to Blanche to claim his partner. She had listened to the conversation between Philip and her cousin with feelings of

distress and apprehension, which had at the conclusion become well-nigh unendurable, as the conviction grew upon her, that George knew of Philip's guilt, and that he was determined to make him feel the consequences of that knowledge, at any rate, if he did not mean to use it against him.

Occupied with his own feelings, Philip had not noticed the expression of Blanche's face when he led her to the dance; but as they took their places, he felt her hand tremble on his arm.

'Are you not well?' he asked, glancing at her. 'Would you rather not dance?'

'Oh, no. I shall manage.'

Blanche would have been thankful to sit still, but a refusal at that moment would have attracted attention to herself, and perhaps would have suggested to the company the cause of her agitation; and, though she felt at that moment some return of her old shrinking from Philip, she was very anxious that he should not perceive it. Actuated by all these motives, she had forced herself to join the dancers. Philip, however, could not help feeling very uncomfortable about her, and he was on the point of insisting on her sitting down, when she fainted in his arms. The dance was instantly stopped, and Reginald, George and Stanton were round

them directly. Philip, though he did not absolutely refuse to give up his burden to her brother or her cousins, managed to avoid doing so. He followed Mrs. Scott upstairs, with Blanche in his arms, and his heart full of an inexpressible tenderness, not unmixed with compunction, as he reflected that it might have been the incident that had just taken place which had caused the faintness. The company below waited in considerable anxiety until Fanny appeared with the intelligence that Miss Ainslie was better, and that Philip was gone for some medicine for her. In half-an-hour Philip made his appearance, stating that his patient had recovered considerably, and that she would return with Mrs. Mansfield in the carriage, which was waiting for them.

Dancing was then resumed, and Philip seemed as if he wished to make up for lost time. He danced in every dance till nearly the end of the party, when Stanton went, and Philip hastened after him, saying that he would go with him, and he should then hear how Miss Ainslie was. He did not leave, however, without telling Mrs. Scott, that she must not think that he was running away because he was not enjoying her delightful party, and that he would return for his sister very soon.

On their arrival at Mrs. Mansfield's, where it had been arranged that Blanche should remain a few days, they heard that Miss Ainslie was asleep, which was a source of great satisfaction to Philip.

He went again early the next morning, but he was not satisfied with Blanche's state ; she seemed weak and nervous. Neither was Mrs. Mansfield satisfied with the way in which her colour came and went under Philip's scrutiny, and she feared that the young surgeon would be at no loss to divine its cause. He said that he hoped that Miss Ainslie would be all right in a few days ; and when Mrs. Mansfield asked him afterwards what he thought was the cause of her niece's attack, he replied, that it was sometimes difficult in such cases to trace the immediate cause, but that Miss Ainslie's state indicated an undesirable weakness, and that perhaps in a few weeks, when the weather was likely to be more settled, a change might prove beneficial, a sentiment with which Mrs. Mansfield cordially agreed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEXT EVENING.

‘ And judge none lost ; but wait and see,
With hopeful pity, not disdain ;
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain
And love and glory that may raise
This soul to God in after-days !’

A. A. PROCTOR.

BLANCHE was in the drawing-room when the others came in after dinner. She was sitting on a low chair near the fire, looking rather languid, but with a faint tinge of colour on her cheek.

‘ Well, Blanche,’ said Reginald, after he had inquired how she was, ‘ I think you have done with parties for this winter.’

‘ Perhaps I have,’ she replied, a little indifferently.

‘ You have come out in quite a new character

as a fainting young lady,' observed Stanton. 'I never knew you do that before.'

'Except at the overturn,' said Mrs. Mansfield.

'Oh, that was excusable.'

'And this was not, I suppose?' said Blanche.

'Well, I don't know what excuse you had, I am sure. How was it, Blanche?'

'I had not felt well for a short time, and then I became faint all at once,' she replied, her colour fading.

'You made quite a sensation, I assure you,' said George.

'I was very sorry to make a disturbance. I hope that I did not spoil the party.'

'We began dancing again when Lyndon came and said that you were better,' replied George.

'He is a singular young man,' observed Mrs. Mansfield.

'I was not aware that he held such atheistical opinions,' said the curate.

'I think that you are not quite fair there,' remonstrated Stanton.

'Well, he stated his belief in the theory of Evolution, and he stated what were the logical consequences of that theory. I judge him by his own words,' replied Reginald.

'I don't think that he meant that, at all,' said Blanche.

‘ You don’t know what he meant, Blanche, replied Reginald, sharply. ‘ You did not hear half that he said, so how can you judge ? I did not expect that he would take the view that he did,’ the curate continued ; ‘ though, perhaps, I ought to have been prepared for that when I consider what he is. A man of his character, brought up without religious training, willingly and also by education a materialist, is just the sort of man who would have no scruple, either of feeling or of conscience, but would be likely enough to glory in his own shame, and in the dishonour and degradation of religion if he could bring it about by his audacious impiety.’

‘ I don’t think that he is quite so bad as that, Reginald,’ said Stanton ; at least, I hope not.

Blanche had been very much shocked by Philip’s views ; but her brother’s words went so far beyond what she thought just, that they produced a revulsion of feeling. Mrs. Mansfield could not help thinking that almost any gentleman in the position of suitor, under peculiar disadvantages, to Reginald’s sister, would, in an argument with him, have been anxious to avoid stating his sentiments in a manner that could not fail to clash violently with the deepest convictions and most cherished views of the curate.

Reginald shook his head mournfully, and

George observed that Lyndon was equal to anything of that kind.

‘What a beautiful voice Miss Lyndon has!’ he added; ‘and she knows how to manage it, too.’

‘That duet was certainly very amusing,’ remarked Stanton; ‘but I should not have liked to hear Blanche sing it.’

‘Oh, there was no harm in it, I think,’ replied George.

‘Fanny complained,’ said Blanche, ‘that her brother would not let her sing it with any one but himself.’

‘Quite right of him. I am very glad he has so much sense,’ remarked Mrs. Mansfield.

‘I told her,’ continued Blanche, ‘that my brother would not let me sing it at all.’

‘What did she say to that?’ asked George.

‘She said that she was glad that he was not her brother.’

All laughed at this, including Reginald, who remarked that he begged to return Miss Lyndon’s compliment heartily.

‘Poor thing!’ said Mrs. Mansfield. ‘One cannot help liking her; there is something about her very winning.’

Stanton thought so too, though he said nothing. He checked a sigh, as he reflected

that the character of her whole life might depend very much upon the influences by which she was moulded during the next few years.

‘The Lyndons keep one alive,’ he remarked. ‘They will let no one go to sleep near them.’

‘Oh, they are sharp enough in material things,’ answered Reginald; ‘but I am afraid that their sense of spiritual matters is very dull indeed.’

‘Tom might be capable of improvement in that respect, I should think,’ said Stanton.

‘I must get him to prepare for the Confirmation,’ remarked Reginald.

‘He took such offence about the rose-tree affair,’ replied Stanton, ‘that I don’t think you will manage that. You were too hard upon him there, Reginald. I have never found him out in a lie; and when I questioned Harry, he said that he had not. I don’t think Tom would have denied it if he had done it.’

‘Well, I am willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, but I cannot imagine who could have done it.’

‘If you are willing to pass over what happened about the rose-tree, I may tell you what Tom said when I asked him about the Confirmation,’ said Blanche; ‘and that was, that he

did not feel quite ready for it yet, but perhaps he should the next time.'

'I suppose he thinks that it would be necessary for him to give up various cherished naughtinesses, which he is not willing to do for another year,' observed the curate. 'People talk,' he continued, 'as if they were masters of their own lives, and it were quite impossible that they might be gone by another year.'

'I told him, that we never knew what might happen, and that there was no time like the present,' answered Blanche; 'but he said, that if he was not ready it could not be helped, and that if he was not alive then, he supposed he should be where he had no need to be confirmed. I don't know whether he meant that he should be in heaven, I am sure.'

'I hope that his brother has not infected him with his own scepticism with regard to immortality,' remarked Reginald.

'Most likely he has not troubled his head about such things,' said Stanton.

'Tom finished his speech,' continued Blanche, 'with saying that he should like to go to your Bible-class, Reginald.'

'He was not willing when I asked him, soon after they came,' replied the curate.

'I think Harry has been telling him of it,'

said Blanche. 'But I had to promise that I would say nothing about it unless you asked about the Confirmation.'

'He has some of his brother's pride, I see,' remarked Reginald.

'I don't think it was altogether pride,' returned Blanche. 'I think it was partly delicacy of feeling.'

'I am sure none of the Lyndons are overburdened with that,' declared George.

'And I don't think that boys ever have any at all,' said Reginald.

'Nay,' rejoined Stanton; 'it seems to me that an ingenuous boy has often a good deal of delicacy in things that come within his range; and I believe that a boy who has no feeling of that kind will have no delicacy in other things when he becomes a man. It struck me, George,' he continued, turning to his brother, 'that you pushed Lyndon further than was justifiable last night.'

'Well, I knew his way of making audacious statements, and I wished to see how far he would go. It seems to me that he is utterly unprincipled, and that there is very little at which he would hesitate to obtain his object.'

'Nay, George,' said Stanton, 'I don't think that he is so bad as that.'

‘Nor I either,’ observed Mrs. Mansfield.

‘I think he has some pagan idea that good is better than evil,’ remarked the curate. ‘But he is, certainly, very far from being in a regenerate state. In fact, he is not a Christian at all!’

‘It seems to me,’ said Stanton, ‘that we are not exercising the charity that thinketh no evil.’

He went to the piano to try a new song, while George, with a shrug of the shoulders almost too slight to be perceptible, though Blanche noticed it, proposed a game of chess with Reginald.

Blanche had listened to the opinions which had been so freely expressed about Philip with very great pain. She felt that not one of them gave him credit for the good qualities that he did possess, while they exaggerated his faults. She felt, also, how difficult it would be for him to make a favourable impression on her friends, while she could not conceal from herself that he had not set about the right way towards the accomplishment of that desirable object.

CHAPTER X.

FANNY'S VEXATION.

‘The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness,
And time to speak it in ; you rub the sore,
When you should bring the plaster.’

SHAKESPEARE.

ONE evening, about a week after Mrs. Scott's party, Fanny and Tom were the only occupants of the drawing-room ; Fanny was at the piano, and Tom was intent on a book which Harry had lent him. Whether or not bodily exercise was indispensable to the full enjoyment of the book, it was certain that the young student was very indefatigable in its pursuit. He had fidgeted the cushion loose from the Derby chair on which he was sitting, and when it was on the point of falling on the floor, he had by a dexterous series of wriggings contrived to get it back into its place, where,

however, it did not seem destined long to remain, for with every movement of Tom's body it inclined a little to the opposite side.

When Philip entered the room, Fanny jumped up from the piano, exclaiming joyfully :

‘Oh, Phil, I have had an invitation to a dance at the Hall!’

‘They ought to ask me, I can dance,’ cried Tom, raising his voice at the last word, as he made a great lurch to catch the rebellious cushion, and, overbalancing himself, came down on the floor just before Philip, who nearly tumbled over him.

‘That performance would be very suitable at a party,’ said Philip, seizing Tom, who, however, wriggled out of his brother's grasp and scrambled back to his chair. Philip sat down with a very grave face.

‘Fanny,’ he said, ‘you cannot go to the Hall.’

‘Cannot go to the Hall? What do you mean?’

‘I mean what I say,’ replied Philip, firmly.

‘Why may I not go?’

‘It is not a fit place for you, Fanny.’

‘I thought you liked Mrs. Carrington.’

‘Yes, I do. But I do not like her company, or her husband either.’

‘ I believe you do not want me to see how you flirt with Mrs. What’s-her-name.’

‘ Fanny !’ exclaimed Philip, angrily.

‘ I *will* go, Philip. I will ask papa. He will let me go, I am sure.’

‘ You shall *not* go, Fanny.’

‘ Is papa master in his own house, Philip, or are you ?’

‘ I will be master in this. He does not care what becomes of you, and I do.’

‘ He had better care what becomes of *you*, Philip. If Miss Blanche Ainslie knew——’

‘ Fanny !’ cried Philip, almost fiercely ; ‘ mind what you say.

‘ You need not pretend to be so particular, Philip. You’ll never please her, whatever you do.’

‘ I don’t know that !’ cried Tom, who had been an attentive listener to the conversation. ‘ I noticed how she blushed the other day, when——’

‘ Hush, Tom,’ said Philip, gently.

‘ She blushed with anger, I should think,’ rejoined Fanny. ‘ She is not of your sort, I am sure, Philip.’

A sharp reply rose to Philip’s lips, but he restrained himself, and left the room ; and Fanny poured out her indignation to Tom, who said very coolly :

‘Well, Fanny, I don’t understand these things ; but I dare say Phil does. He generally knows what he is about.’

It had been the summit of Fanny’s ambition to get into the gay circle at the Hall ; and she looked upon what she considered her brother’s new-born fit of propriety as something ridiculous. She had half a mind to speak to her father, and to go in spite of Philip ; and she lay awake long that night considering what she should do. She hesitated to speak to her father, as she knew that would cause a violent quarrel between him and her brother ; and, after all, she could not go if Philip would not take her, which she knew that nothing her father could say would make him do if he had made up his mind to a contrary course. She determined to make one more attempt to influence Philip, and if that was not successful, of which there seemed to be little chance, she should have to give it up as hopeless.

The next morning Fanny watched impatiently for her father and her brother to appear at breakfast. It happened that, Mr. Lyndon being earlier than usual, and Philip being later, they sat down to table together, a rather unusual occurrence. As Fanny looked from one to the other, she thought that neither of the faces pre-

sented an aspect which was promising of success for her project. Mr. Lyndon's face wore that expression of irritability which was habitual to it when he was with his own family ; and Philip, though he did not look exactly cross, had a cloud upon his brow. Tom's face was the only one on which there was a gleam of sunshine, for Fanny looked unusually discontented and ungenial. Tom soon fell into disgrace. His father scolded him for leaving the door open, and for drumming upon the table ; and Fanny told him sharply to sit still in his chair and not to fidget, and that if he upset his coffee again on the table-cloth he should have no more. Had either her father or her brother been in a good humour, Fanny would have ventured ; but as it was, she durst not, and the meal passed almost in silence. When it was over, Mr. Lyndon went out of the room, and Philip stood at the window looking out at the snowdrops and crocuses in the garden, wondering when he should have an opportunity of speaking to Miss Ainslie. Fanny, anxious not to miss the last chance, came and stood beside him. Just as he was turning away, she said, coaxingly :

‘ I wish you would let me go, Phil, just this once.’

‘ To the Hall ?’ he asked, a little impatiently.

‘No, it is out of the question. Think no more about it, Fanny.’

‘That is very fine,’ she replied angrily. ‘Think no more about it, indeed, when you take care to spoil all my pleasure by your tyranny.’ And the tears of disappointment and vexation came into her eyes.

‘Don’t be a baby, Fanny.’

‘I do believe she’s going to cry because she ain’t going to the party,’ cried Tom. ‘Well, I never!’

‘Be quiet, Tom,’ said Fanny, sharply.

Tom made a somerset on his way to the door. Philip was also going, when Fanny stopped him, by saying, in a low voice, that Tom might not hear :

‘I know why you do not want me to go, and I know, too, who was the lady that came the other day.’

It was a mere random shaft on Fanny’s part, and the effect it produced was a very unexpected one.

‘Fanny!’ cried Philip, in a voice that trembled with passion, ‘do you want to insult me?’

He seized her arm in his iron grasp. Fanny gave a scream of mingled terror and pain, which brought Tom back from the door. Philip loosed his sister’s arm and left the room.

‘Philip is cruel—and wicked!’ said Fanny, between her sobs. She was fairly crying now, as she looked at the marks of Philip’s fingers on her arm. ‘I shall never love him any more.’

‘Oh yes, you will,’ replied Tom, soothingly. ‘Don’t cry, Fanny. I would bear it like a man if I were you. You should let Phil alone,’ he added, by way of mingling a little judicious advice with his sympathy. ‘He has bother enough, without your worrying him.’

Philip, before he went into the surgery, walked up and down the garden, wondering what Blanche would think of him did she but know, and asking himself whether any possible combination of circumstances could lead him to treat her in that way. The idea thus presented to his mind was so startling that he felt almost aghast at himself; and he did not wonder, at that moment, that Blanche, in spite of all his devoted affection for her, had shrunk from him with instinctive fear, which even now she occasionally betrayed, overpowering, for the time, the feeling for him which he was almost sure she entertained. He tried to think that Blanche would not irritate him as Fanny had so often done; but there arose in his mind the recollection of the anger, that he had sometimes felt against her on account of her continued doubts

of him and her consequent coldness and reticence. Philip felt, that, before the time should come—which, however, seemed to be far enough distant—when he could call her his own, he must be quite sure of himself, that by no act of his her tender spirit should be crushed ; and that her heart, if ever she could allow herself to give it into his keeping, must not be bruised and wounded by his selfish violence.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE LANE.

‘No fort so fensible, no walls so strong,
But that continual battery will rive;
Or daily siege through dispurvayaunce long
And lack of rescues will to parley drive.’

SPENSER.

PHILIP went about his work that day with a heavy heart. He was returning in the afternoon from a long ride, and had just entered one of the avenues leading to the town, when he saw Mrs. Mansfield in the phaeton at a short distance before him. Miss Ainslie was not with her; but Philip’s quick eye soon discovered, almost on the other side of the meadow on the right, a figure which he had no difficulty in recognising as hers. As he rode by the side of the phaeton, talking to Mrs. Mansfield, he saw between the trunks of the trees, that the figure

disappeared at a farm-house that lay on the border of the large meadow, which was divided from the road merely by a low bank on which the trees were planted. When Philip left Mrs. Mansfield he rode into the town, but instead of going straight home he turned his horse's head in the direction of the lane by which he felt sure that Miss Ainslie would return. Nor was he out of his reckoning, for he was just slackening his pace as he came to a low part of the hedge to see where the path from the farm was likely to come into the lane when he beheld Blanche coming across the field. He sprang from his horse, and hastened to open the gate for her that she might not be startled by his sudden appearance. The colour came into her face as soon as she saw him.

‘I am afraid that I got into sad disgrace the other night, in my argument with your brother,’ he said, as soon as they had exchanged greetings.

‘Yes, you did, Mr. Lyndon,’ was her reply ; ‘and it was not altogether undeserved, I think.’

‘Are you so harsh a judge?’ he asked, as he walked by her side, holding his horse by the bridle. ‘I believe that a man is no more responsible for his opinions than he is for his nature.’

‘As far as he is responsible for the spirit in

which he investigates such questions, he is responsible for the conclusions at which he arrives,' answered Blanche.

'I don't see that at all, Miss Ainslie.'

'I mean,' continued Blanche, 'that he who studies such questions in a thoroughly materialistic spirit, and with a predetermination to refuse all recognition of spiritual realities if possible, will most likely come to a different conclusion from that reached by one who pursues his inquiries with more reverence, knowing that all truth is but a revelation in some form or other of the Infinite Spirit.'

'I stand rebuked, Miss Ainslie ; but I think my position was a little misunderstood. I did not mean to deny the existence of spirit ; I was showing the working out of a theory, but I do not wish to hold myself responsible for all that may appear to be involved in it.'

'My brother, I am sure, confounded your opinions with your theory,' replied Blanche. 'I should advise you to make that point a little clearer the next time that you argue on the subject.'

'I hope you are not very much shocked at my views, Miss Ainslie ?'

'I am shocked,' she said ; 'but I don't want to have another argument about them.'

'I do not wish to annoy you, I am sure,' he answered. 'I hope you feel stronger to-day.'

'Yes, thank you.'

As their eyes met, each perceived of what the other was thinking.

'I am afraid that something else troubled you that evening,' he said, in a low voice.

'It was a great shock to me, Mr. Lyndon, to find from what passed that George knows——' She stopped in some confusion.

'Yes, he knows,' said Philip, with a sigh. 'And, unfortunately,' he added, 'he is my determined enemy.'

'You surely do not think that he would betray you. He cannot be capable of that.'

'He may not betray me. But he will use his knowledge against me as far as he can without positively doing that.'

'How came he to know?' asked Blanche.

'I cannot explain that now,' answered Philip.

'Mr. Lyndon, if, instead of irritating my cousin, you would throw yourself upon his generosity, I think that you would have no reason to repent.'

Philip smiled bitterly.

'You do not know him,' he replied.

'If what you think of him is true, Mr. Lyndon,' said Blanche, 'it seems to me that

the course which you are taking is little short of madness.'

Philip sighed, and for a minute they walked on in silence. Blanche's cheek had lost all its colour.

'I must urge you,' she continued, 'to exercise a little common-sense in this matter.'

'You are hard upon me, Miss Ainslie.'

They had reached a part of the lane where a path branched from it across the water meadows. Blanche had no mind to walk into the town with Philip at her side, so she paused at the turnstile.

'Are you going that way?' he asked. 'Tell me, at any rate, that I have your friendship, and that, whatever happens, you will give me your sympathy.'

'Whatever happens.' The phrase struck upon Blanche's ear with an ominous sound.

'Yes,' she said, 'you may feel sure of that. But, now I know more of the danger you are in, I shall expect you to act with ordinary prudence and caution.'

'You mean that the more I have need of your sympathy the less I am to be allowed to seek for its expression.'

'If you know that I sympathise with you, you ought to be satisfied,' she said.

He looked very far from being satisfied, however, at this moment.

‘I am always afraid that you will be influenced by others to turn against me,’ he said, looking at her with pleading eyes.

The thoughts of both of them had been so much occupied that they had not heard the sound of horses’ feet, until, round a bend in the lane, came Mrs. Gordon, attended by Colonel Carrington, followed by Mrs. Carrington and Major Gordon. Blanche hurried away without waiting for a greeting from the Carringtons; and Philip jumped on his horse, which was industriously occupied in cropping the hedge. Blanche, as she walked on, heard the sound of merry laughter, and the voice of Colonel Carrington evidently bantering Philip on his *tête-à-tête*. She felt intensely annoyed at the incident. It seemed as if everything that she had to do with Philip was sure to end in something unpleasant; and she came to the conclusion, that if she had had a grain of common-sense she would have resolutely refused, long ago, to have any communication with him. Then there recurred to her mind Philip’s words, that George was his determined enemy, which, coupled with something in her cousin’s manner on the occasion when she had discovered his knowledge of

Lyndon's affairs, inspired her with a fear which she could not shake off. She felt that her own refusal of George, especially if he attributed it to the success of his rival, would complicate the difficulties of the situation more than she had any idea of at the time. The wisest course, she thought, for Philip to follow would be, to avoid any attention to herself, and to keep on quietly in the pursuance of a course which would, in time, win him the respect and esteem of her friends ; thus giving time for George's animosity to cool, and for him to form new ties, under the influence of which he would look at things from a totally different point of view, and would be able to smile at their old causes of disagreement.

‘ My dear Blanche,’ said Mrs. Mansfield, when she arrived at home, ‘ how pale you are ! I am afraid the walk has been too much for you. Mr. Lyndon overtook me as I came up the avenue,’ she continued ; ‘ and he objected very much to your going as far as Westmoreland at present. He said that the journey would be too fatiguing, and that it would be better for you to go somewhere nearer first. What do you think.’

‘ I would rather go there than anywhere else, aunt.’

‘ So I thought. I told him, that you could

not go for a few weeks, as your uncle and cousins are away from home, and he said that you might be stronger by that time.'

'I may, if he does not worry me,' thought Blanche.

Philip had evidently gone round on purpose to meet her. A little of the old hunted feeling came over her, accompanied by the wish to be where he could not follow.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CLASS.

‘In simple scenes Content doth oft take part ;
While Pleasure’s smiles hide many an aching heart.’
A. J. K.

It was on the evening of the dance at the Hall, that Blanche took her way towards Mr. Lyndon’s. George was gone, she knew, and she thought that Philip, who would be sure to have been invited, would also have set off by this time, unless something had happened to detain him. On arriving at the house, she inquired for Miss Lyndon ; and, as she was conducted along the passage, she heard the sound of somewhat uproarious merriment from the dining-room, accompanied by the jingling of glasses. When she entered the drawing-room, Fanny was reading a novel with a somewhat disconso-

late air, while Tom, who was the only other occupant of the room, was balancing himself on the arm of the sofa, exercising his arms and legs in a series of gymnastics of a somewhat violent character. He slid down from his perch, and Fanny rose from her chair, on Blanche's entrance.

'I am come to ask a favour,' said Blanche, when the greetings were over.

'Of me?' asked Tom.

'No, not of you, of your sister. We are short of teachers to-night at the class,' she continued, turning to Fanny; 'and the rector has just sent for Reginald, for nothing particular, I expect, and Stanton and Harry are both out of town, so I thought that you would not mind coming to help.'

'Oh, not at all,' replied Fanny, glad of anything that would break the monotony of the evening.

'I can come too, if you like,' suggested Tom, who had stationed himself on an ottoman by the side of the fire.

'I don't know whether you will be steady enough,' said Blanche.

'Oh yes, I will; I am steady at church, am I not?'

'Yes, but it is not exactly like church,'

replied Blanche, smiling; 'there are more temptations.'

'All right, I'll be steady; you see if I don't.'

At this moment Philip's clear decided tones were heard calling for his brother.

'Here!' shouted Tom at the top of his voice, jumping up at the same time in such a hurry that he overturned the fire-irons, startling Blanche almost out of her senses. Philip opened the door, and, seeing who was there, he came in, his face lighting up with pleasure. He was in evening-dress, evidently just ready to depart.

'I am going to the class with Miss Ainslie,' announced Tom.

'Indeed! As a scholar, or as a teacher?'

'As a teacher, of course. I am going to help instead of Mr. Ainslie.'

'I hope you will manage properly. What shall you do if the boys are naughty?'

'Oh, cuff them all round, or ring a bell, I suppose.'

'Cuffing is not allowed,' interposed Blanche.

'Well, then, I shall ring the bell, and call out "Silence!"'

'And make more noise than all the rest put together, I suppose,' said Philip. 'But I

think that you ought not to go,' he added, turning to Blanche.

'I did not mean to go to-night, but as Reginald is out, I must.'

'When she has set us going, I'll take her home,' said Tom. 'But you'll be late at the Hall, Phil.'

'Oh, I shall be in time enough.'

'We shall be late at the class,' observed Blanche.

'I'll go and dress ; I shan't be a minute,' said Fanny.

She left the room, Tom racing after her in a manner which suggested to Blanche that he divined what were his brother's wishes on the subject.

'If I could rule, Miss Ainslie,' said Philip tenderly, as soon as the door was closed, 'you would not go to-night.'

'It is very well that you cannot, Mr. Lyndon.'

'You must excuse me from agreeing with that statement,' he replied.

'It will make no difference whether you agree or not, sir,' thought Blanche ; 'at least, for a long time to come.'

'I hope that you will not be overtired,' he continued. 'I know that it is of no use asking

you to take care of yourself for my sake. I wish I could look forward to the time when I might take care of you.'

Fanny coming in at this moment, he could say no more, and they went into the hall. Philip accompanied them through the garden, but he was obliged to take leave of Blanche at the gate, where his dog-cart was waiting.

'Tell them to send for me if there is anything particular,' he said to Tom as he drove off.

'All right! broken leg, or anything, I suppose,' cried Tom; and he ran to the surgery with the desired direction, and then went racing after Blanche and Fanny.

Blanche found Tom a much more useful helper than she expected. He entered into the work with his whole heart. He evidently possessed much more concentration of purpose than his sister, and he showed a readiness and decision that reminded Blanche forcibly of Philip, while in patience and good-temper he far surpassed that gentleman. Some of the boys, taking advantage of the absence of the curate, showed an unpleasant spirit of insubordination; but Tom, by his firmness and energy, aided by the efforts of some of the elder boys, soon crushed the inci-

pient rebellion, and maintained a tolerable degree of order to the end.

‘What a splendid night!’ exclaimed Fanny, when they came out of the school-room. ‘How delightful it would be for a walk.’

‘We might go round by the Walks, as we have got a cavalier,’ replied Blanche.

By the Walks accordingly they went; Tom varying the monotony of the proceedings by leaping over the bands of turf which separated the carriage-drive from the footpath on either hand.

‘Do come in,’ said Blanche to Fanny when they reached the house; ‘aunt will be glad to see you, and you too, Tom.’

Fanny was easily persuaded; Tom said he would run home and see how they were going on, and by the time that the two girls had taken off their hats and jackets he was back again. Stanton, who had just returned, inquired how they had got on; and Blanche replied, that they had managed very well with the help of Miss Lyndon and Tom.

‘I am sure,’ she added, ‘that Reginald will be pleased to hear that I have had your help.’

‘And I expect he will think that Fanny has been much better employed than if she had

gone to the dance at the Hall,' observed Tom.

'Had you any thoughts of going to the Hall?' asked Blanche of Fanny, in some surprise.

'Yes, I meant to go.'

'And Phil would not let her,' said Tom.

'I am glad that he would not,' remarked Mrs. Mansfield.

'And I want to ask Stanton whether Phil was not right.'

'I expect he is competent to form his own judgment,' was Stanton's answer.

'There ! I thought you would think so,' cried Tom triumphantly.

'I don't know that I am bound to agree with Mr. Stanton,' observed Fanny ; 'and I cannot see what harm there could be in my going.'

'Well, I don't think you can blame Phil, at any rate,' declared Tom.

'I believe your brother was quite right, Miss Lyndon,' said Stanton to Fanny ; 'and you will think so yourself, some day.'

Miss Lyndon looked as if nothing could make her think so.

'I enjoy a dance very much,' remarked Blanche, 'but I cannot say that I have much inclination to go to the Hall for one.'

‘I think Phil does not enjoy parties much,’ observed Tom, ‘for he is generally in the dumps the next morning.’

‘He did not enjoy Mrs. Scott’s party much,’ thought Stanton ; ‘whether he did ours or not, I don’t know.’

‘Philip says that he likes Mrs. Carrington very much,’ observed Fanny. ‘I should like to know more of her, she looks so kind.’

‘I don’t like Mrs. Gordon at all,’ said Blanche.

‘Phil does not either,’ remarked Tom.

As Fanny had Master Tom for escort, there was no need of Stanton seeing her home ; and she departed, thinking, that there might be some excuse for Philip, though he need not have been so cross about it ; but that there was no talking to him without his getting into a temper. It had completely escaped Fanny’s memory that she had said the most aggravating thing to her brother of which she could think on the occasion in question.

‘It is very well that young Lyndon does look after his sister,’ said Mrs. Mansfield, when Fanny and Tom were gone.

‘I expect that he does not do it in a very judicious way,’ observed Stanton ; ‘and they

are all so high-spirited, and what Reginald calls "unregenerate," that there must necessarily be a good deal of chafing when things occur of which they take different views.'

'It must be miserable to live in a house like that,' said Blanche.

'Well, I don't suppose it is quite like Paradise.'

'I am sorry for Fanny,' remarked Mrs. Mansfield; 'she seems to need a little guidance sadly. I think we ought to see more of her, but I wish she would not flirt with George.'

'George ought to have more sense, if she has not,' said Stanton indignantly. 'But you might have her here sometimes when George is away,' he added, feeling grateful to his mother for her suggestion.

'I am sure I shall be very glad,' said Blanche heartily.

'I am afraid that "Phil," as his brother calls him, would become very brotherly all at once, and anxious to enjoy his sister's society, would he not, Blanche?' asked Stanton. 'I wish that he were more like Tom!' he added, with a sigh.

Blanche praised Tom's conduct at the class very highly, concluding with the remark that

the more she saw of him the better she liked him.

‘I think that we have managed pretty well lately with that troublesome lover of Blanche’s,’ remarked Mrs. Mansfield, when her niece had left the room. ‘I believe that he has had no opportunity of speaking to her alone for some time.’

‘That will be difficult to keep up,’ replied her son, ‘as well as impossible to carry out in the long run. You had better get Blanche away as soon as possible, for it strikes me that Lyndon is not very easily baffled. I am afraid that Blanche is not firm with him.’

‘I have no fear that she will yield weakly,’ replied Mrs. Mansfield.

‘Any yielding would be weak in this case,’ was Stanton’s answer. ‘It must be war *à outrance* with such a man. I have no faith in him.’

‘I don’t think that Blanche has much either, or she would grant him more favour.’

‘There is one advantage with a man like Lyndon,’ continued Stanton; ‘he is extremely anxious to make a good impression, and as soon as he has partially succeeded, he is sure to do something that cuts the ground from under his

feet, and then he has to begin again at the beginning.'

'He has certainly proved himself to be his own enemy in Blanche's case,' replied Mrs. Mansfield. He has no one but himself to blame for his want of success.'

CHAPTER XIII.

PLOTTING.

‘As yet I cannot say
What I *shall* do—only give way
I will not.’

COLERIDGE.

THE tender light which had shone on Philip's face when he parted from Miss Ainslie faded away as he drove towards the Hall. He knew that he should see George there; and, much as Philip detested meeting him, he was determined not to give his rival the advantage that any appearance of shrinking from him would do. He had not seen George since the night of the party at Mrs. Scott's, but he had not forgotten the warning which he had received on that occasion, though he had determined that it should not prevent him from urging his suit at every possible opportunity. Many

times in the silence of the night had George's ominous words recurred to his mind, and he had considered and reconsidered the probability of the threat which they contained being put into execution. Would not George hesitate to have events in which he had had some share dragged before the public, events in which also Mrs. Gordon's name would be involved in a disreputable manner? Yet Philip had little doubt, that, unless he would give up all pretension to Blanche, George would, at any rate, blight his reputation, perhaps even drive him from the town.

The dancing had commenced when Lyndon arrived; Mrs. Carrington, however, was resting, and he made his way to her at once, taking a seat beside her. She had not joined in the bantering with which he had been attacked at the meeting in the lane, and which he had parried laughingly, escaping as soon as possible. After some desultory conversation, Mrs. Carrington said:

'I am sorry that your sister is not here to-night; I should have liked to see something of her.'

'I should have been pleased for her to know you,' he replied; 'but there are some of the Colonel's friends whom I do not wish her to meet.'

The colour rose in Mrs. Carrington's face, and she looked as if she had a great mind to be offended at this bold speech. She was not used to be addressed in such a frank fashion. A moment's reflection, however, sufficed to make her take a different view of the case.

'Perhaps you are right, Mr. Lyndon,' she said; 'but I am sorry nevertheless. I don't know whether I am premature,' she continued smiling, 'in congratulating you on your engagement.'

'Mrs. Carrington,' he replied gravely, 'that is an event which neither has taken place, nor is ever likely to take place.'

She looked surprised.

'Miss Ainslie appears to be so demure,' she said, 'that I should scarcely have thought her capable of carrying on a flirtation.'

'Nor is she,' replied Philip. 'You do not understand how it is, Mrs. Carrington, and you must excuse me from explaining.'

His tone was so sad that Mrs. Carrington divined the truth at once.

'He has offered himself and has been refused,' she thought, 'and he is trying to persuade the lady to reconsider her decision. Poor fellow! I do not wonder at her refusing him, considering to what set she belongs.'

‘You will feel that I do not wish this mentioned to anyone,’ he said.

‘Of course,’ she replied.

Mrs. Carrington’s partner came at this moment to claim her for the dance. He happened to be a somewhat stately country gentleman, who was not distinguished for remarkable conversational powers; so she had ample time for reflection. Before the conclusion of the dance she had made a pretty accurate estimate of Philip’s position and feelings as far as they had come under her notice. Several trifling incidents which had occurred had opened her eyes to the existence of qualities in Mrs. Gordon that made her not quite so desirable an acquaintance as she had at first supposed. That lady’s penchant for Philip had almost from the first been suspected, and very soon the discovery had been made that he did not return it. Mrs. Carrington now felt sure that he wished, as much as possible, to avoid Mrs. Gordon, and she determined to befriend him, by aiding him in such a manner as not to attract the attention of the lady in question. She took several opportunities during the evening of putting her friendly intention into practice, and she did it with a tact and delicacy that won Philip’s admiration as well as his gratitude.

When Philip approached Mrs. Gordon to render her the courtesy which was her due, she received him with a degree of hauteur that gave him an admirable excuse for avoiding her. Later in the evening she appeared to have repented of her coldness ; but Philip, greatly to her mortification, succeeded, with the aid of Mrs. Carrington's kindness, in keeping his distance.

George, since the threat which he had given to Philip, had been revolving in his mind how far it would be prudent to communicate his intentions with regard to that gentleman to Mrs. Gordon. He felt that it was very delicate ground on which to venture, and yet he was anxious to secure her assistance as an ally. Mrs. Gordon had not mentioned Lyndon to George except incidentally. She had long since discerned, that she had made a mistake in putting herself in the power of a man so wily and so deceitful as was George Mansfield, who, if he were not so determined as Lyndon, was more unscrupulous, and had no generosity of nature to which to appeal. Her motive in her present intercourse with Mansfield was, by playing upon his vanity and self-love, to make him her tool in annoying Philip, but not to grant him that degree of intimacy which might

make him dangerous. She knew that to play fast and loose with such a man was a rather hazardous game, but she also knew that a fair name and an honourable position in his profession and in society were the objects of Mansfield's devotion, to the maintenance of which, she believed, even his pleasures and his revenge were alike subordinate. Mrs. Gordon owed him a bitter grudge, which she longed to satisfy, for it was to his interference that she attributed the catastrophe which had separated her from Philip. George was considering how he should introduce the subject on which he wished to sound Mrs. Gordon, when she saved him the trouble, for, as Philip passed them with Mrs. Carrington, she asked :

‘Is Philip Lyndon engaged to your cousin, Mr. Mansfield?’

‘Not that I am aware of.’

Mrs. Gordon described the incident of the parting in the lane, to which George listened attentively.

‘He wishes to be engaged,’ he said.

‘And she?’

‘Is too favourable, I am afraid.’

‘He must not be allowed to marry her.’

‘Certainly not,’ replied George, delighted

with Mrs. Gordon's words. 'He is desperately in love with her.'

'He is?'

George perceived that he had touched the right chord.

'You can manage it, Mr. Mansfield,' said the lady as she bent her head to scent the fragrance of her bouquet.

'I have given him a hint, but he does not seem to take it,' replied George; 'he must have another. But we shall be overheard here; cannot we go into the conservatory?'

Mrs. Gordon consented. The dim light, the quietness and the flower-scented air were pleasant after the glare and bustle of the ball-room. She sat down on a low chair, and George stood beside her.

'Don't let me appear in it,' she said; 'and had you not better give her a hint?'

'Well, that is a matter which is not quite so simple as it appears at first sight,' he replied. 'Lyndon would find out that something had been said, and would tell his own tale, making the best of it that he could.'

'Ah; that would be awkward.'

'And she would be likely enough to tell my brother,' continued George, 'and he would ask me about it. I gave them a hint when Lyndon

first came, and I must not venture upon any more just yet. We must work through him.'

'Of course you would only frighten him,' said Mrs. Gordon.

'It is possible that he may think it is merely a *ruse*, and may defy us,' observed George. 'He has impudence enough. What is to be done then?'

'He would hardly dare to do that, I should think,' she replied.

'It is doubtful whether we could bring evidence enough to convict him.'

'I don't want to do that,' said Mrs. Gordon, hastily. 'Besides,' she added more calmly, 'it would be so dreadfully unpleasant.'

'We may as well consider how matters stand,' remarked George. 'His own confession to me would convict him of manslaughter.'

Mrs. Gordon shuddered.

'But I don't want to be mixed up in it at all,' continued the lawyer; 'so that would be unavailable. But when I was in London the other day, I saw Sandford.'

'What, my old maid?'

'Yes. And she would be prepared to give evidence that he made the attack which terminated so fatally, and that it had been on her conscience ever since.'

‘You are her conscience-keeper, it seems,’ remarked Mrs. Gordon, sarcastically.

‘Sandford would exonerate you from all blame in any shape,’ continued George, ‘though your recent encouragement of Lyndon might cause a little suspicion on that point.’

George noted with satisfaction that his taunt had stung Mrs. Gordon.

‘No one could disprove Sandford’s statement,’ he went on quietly ; ‘and even if it did not convict him, it would damage him so effectually that he would never be able to hold up his head again.’

‘I think you have left out one consideration in your calculations,’ said Mrs. Gordon. ‘It is likely enough, indeed more than likely, that Lyndon, if he were arrested, would at once make a confession of the whole truth without reserve.’

‘That would be awkward. But still, we should get Sandford’s statement made first, and there would be no evidence to support him. I could easily deny knowing anything about it until Sandford told me ; or I could say, that I did not wish to betray the confidence of a friend.’

‘H’m,’ said Mrs. Gordon, sarcastically. ‘Lyndon,’ she added, ‘has a way of saying

things which, somehow or other, conveys a very strong impression that he is speaking the truth.'

'Well, I have merely put the case before you,' observed George. 'Most likely we shall be able to manage him without going to extremities; and, if not, then it will be time to consider whether it will be advisable to do so. But Lyndon is so determined, that he will carry out his plans if he can.'

'Mind, I do not agree to all this,' said Mrs. Gordon, decidedly.'

'Oh, I quite understand that. I merely wished that you should see how the case stands.'

'And you will go no further than warning him, without telling me?'

'Certainly not.'

Mrs. Gordon rose, and walked to the door of the conservatory; then she paused, with her hand upon the latch.

'Remember,' she said, in a low voice, as she half turned her head towards George, 'that if you went beyond my wishes, I could tell things which might be awkward for you.'

He did not answer, and she went back into the ball-room.

'I can tell something that might be awkward for *you*, madam,' muttered George, a look of mortification and annoyance crossing his face.

He shook his head as he stood in the dim light, waiting for an opportunity to slip unnoticed into the room. He felt that it would be a dangerous game to play. If he were sure of Mrs. Gordon, he thought that he could venture upon it; but any sudden return of tenderness for her old lover would imperil everything, and bring disgrace and dishonour upon himself. However, there was no need to decide at present. He would wait and watch, and if he should succeed in harassing Lyndon until he should give up the contest and leave the town, it would be well.

When George returned to the ball-room, he hastened to pay his court to Mrs. Carrington, whom, having been occupied with Mrs. Gordon, he felt that he had somewhat neglected. He thought that she was not quite so cordial as usual. Could Lyndon have been prejudicing her against him, or what was the reason? He had no means of finding out, for the change was so slight as to be scarcely perceptible. The fact was, that Mrs. Carrington's eyes having been opened with regard to Mrs. Gordon's character, she had remarked something in the manner both of that lady and of Mansfield that seemed to imply that there was a league of some kind between them; and she consequently determined to exercise more caution in her inter-

course with George. She took an opportunity, later in the evening, of asking Philip about him ; but that gentleman was so very reticent in his replies, that all which she could make out was, that he did not like Mansfield, and that he had known him in his college days.

After supper, when Lyndon had just sung a merry hunting song, George said to him :

‘Come out with me, Lyndon, and have a cigar.’

Philip knew what that meant, but he could not refuse, neither was he one to shrink from the challenge. He followed Mansfield mechanically, with a feeling towards him that was very near akin to hatred. George went out into the colonnade which extended along the centre of the building between the two wings, and having handed a cigar to his companion, he lighted one himself, Philip doing the same. How peaceful was the scene before them ! The undulating ground, clothed with picturesque clumps of trees, and the groups of deer on the slopes, were all bathed in a flood of silver light from the moon, which seemed to look down rebukingly, with her calm radiance, on the strife of human passions. They walked up and down for a minute, until Mansfield’s cigar was fairly lighted, and then he began :

'Carrington tells me, Lyndon,' he said, 'that you have given occasion for my cousin's name to be the subject of unpleasant comments.'

'I have done no such thing, Mansfield,' replied Philip, in a low, suppressed tone. 'I ought, surely, to be able to exchange a few words with Miss Ainslie without causing any such remarks.'

'I have given you a warning,' said George, coldly, 'and I must repeat it, that, unless you refrain from all pursuit of my cousin, I shall not hesitate to employ measures that will render such a course impossible.'

Lyndon dashed his cigar away.

'Mansfield!' he cried, 'I will submit to no dictation from you, or any one else.'

'You refuse, then, to give her up?'

'I do,' replied Lyndon, fiercely.

'Very well,' said George, nonchalantly. 'I will give you a little time, Lyndon,' he added after a minute's pause, 'to reconsider your position; and then, if you persist in the same course, your fate is sealed.'

Lyndon stood still, leaning against one of the pillars. Indignation at Mansfield's treachery; rage at feeling himself so helpless and so trapped; and a fierce determination not to yield, though even the whole world should be

against him, surged like a rushing tide within his bosom : and through all, like the radiance of some far-off star, shone the image of Blanche, seeming to make the contrast of his passion with its sweet calmness still more vivid.

‘ I can bring forward evidence,’ continued George, between his puffs, ‘ of which you are not aware—Lyndon—and which—has come to my knowledge—only recently.’

Lyndon did not deign to answer. He would not parley with Mansfield. All the intercourse which he condescended to have with him was to defy him. There was silence during the next few minutes. Mansfield puffed away at his cigar, with an expression of impudent triumph on his countenance that goaded Lyndon beyond endurance. With a face of ashy paleness, he took a step towards George.

‘ Leave me !’ he said, in a tone of such imperious command, that George shrank away like a rated hound and went back to the ball-room.

Lyndon wiped the cold dew from his forehead. He felt as if an agony worse than that of death were on him. What future could there be for him ? Nothing but misery and shame. All kinds of wild schemes to elude what seemed his inevitable fate flitted across his brain—to persuade Blanche to fly with him to some far-

away region, where George would not follow ; or to go alone and make a home for her in some secluded place, leaving her with a promise to join him when that should be done. And then he groaned to think that Blanche would never be induced to take that step, even if she loved him deeply ; and how could she bear such love to one like him ? Could she leave her friends and her sweet home-life, to be the wife of the outcast exile, with the brand of Cain upon his brow. He felt that these were impossible dreams. They were like the thought of the land which he should never see to the shipwrecked mariner, far from home and succour ; or of water to the dying pilgrim in the desert.

‘ Oh, Blanche, Blanche ! ’ he thought. ‘ Not one look of love will you give me ; not one word of sympathy, even, except what I wring from you against your will.’

He went back to the ball-room, and, taking a hasty leave of Mrs. Carrington, he left the gay scene of light and music, and drove home beneath the shadow of the over-arching trees, with his heart full of gloom and of despair.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEXT DAY.

‘ And oft in wrath he thence again uprose,
And oft in wrath he layd him down again.
But wheresoere he did himself dispose,
He by no means could wished ease obtain.
So every place seemed painful, and each changing vain.’
SPENSER.

PHILIP passed a miserable night. There seemed to be no resting-place to which his thoughts could turn for a moment's hope or comfort. Whether his mind dwelt upon the wretched past with its guilt and shame, or glanced onward to the future, which must be for him a blank, or worse than a blank, all was dark with a gloom which, as it appeared, nothing could illumine.

He turned away, with a loathing that was indescribable, from the thought either of George or of Mrs. Gordon ; and when the image of

Blanche presented itself before him, it was with the shrinking fear, or the cold indifference, that had so often marked her demeanour. He could not recall the interest which he had fancied she felt in him. The impression of it seemed to have faded from his mind, as he felt the reality, did it exist, would fade, scorched in the hot glare of the passions which seared his heart, could she see him at that moment in the agony of his remorse and of his despair. In the extremity of his misery he reproached Blanche for having presented to his eyes an ideal towards which he had no power to aspire, baited as he was, and engaged in a desperate struggle that could but end in failure. She had pointed to the goal which he must reach to win her favour, and had then abandoned him to his fate, without a word of comfort or encouragement, heedless of what might be his suffering by the way.

Tom and Fanny were the only ones that made their appearance in the morning at the breakfast-table. Tom rather enjoyed breakfasting alone with Fanny, as that offered, he thought, a favourable opportunity for wilder antics, and for thus letting off the steam in a more demonstrative manner than was practicable in Philip's presence. Sometimes he got a sharp rebuke from Fanny, when he became what she

called intolerable ; at others she took no notice of him, as was the case this morning, for she was still brooding over her wrongs in not having been allowed to go to the Hall.

Breakfast over, Tom went into the surgery, but Philip did not come. The patients came, but he did not ; and at length Tom went upstairs in the greatest astonishment. Such a state of things had never occurred before, so far as he knew. He found Philip still in bed. He was ghastly pale, and there was an expression on his face of hopeless wretchedness.

‘ Oh, Phil ! ’ cried Tom, ‘ what is the matter ? Are you ill ? ’

‘ Yes. I cannot get up. ’

‘ Dear Phil ! don’t look like that. ’

Philip groaned.

‘ Tom, I am a ruined man, ’ he said.

‘ Oh, Phil ! tell me what it is. Perhaps I can help you. ’

Philip shook his head.

‘ Do tell me. I might find a way, ’ urged Tom, eagerly ; ‘ or Stanton might, ’ he added, as his brother did not speak.

‘ No, Tom ; it is of no use. You will know soon enough, without my telling you. ’

Tom stood by the bedside with a feeling of horror, of he knew not what, stealing over him,

forgetting all about the patients, till his brother inquired what time it was, and told him to go and ask his father to see the patients. Tom went to his father's room, but he soon returned.

‘Father says that he will get up presently, and come and see you.’

‘I don't want him,’ said Philip.

‘Well, he'll come, at any rate. Should you like to have Fanny?’

‘No, I don't want her either. You may come when you have time.’

‘Is your head bad?’

‘Yes.’

‘I will bathe it,’ said Tom. And he went off in search of Fanny to get some vinegar.

Fanny was alarmed when she heard Tom's account. He, however, did not repeat what his brother had said about being a ruined man.

Fanny said that she would go up and see him, on which Tom said plainly that Philip did not want her.

‘He does not want me!’ exclaimed Fanny, wounded affection and temper flashing over her face, and mingling in the tones of her voice. ‘You may tell him that he need not be afraid. I shall not intrude upon him.’

‘Well, Fanny, you should not have teased

him, you know,' said Tom. 'But I must not stop talking here;' and he hurried upstairs, where he stayed till his father came.

'Too much champagne, eh?' said Mr. Lyndon, as he entered the room.

Philip made no answer, and his father came to the bedside.

'What is it, Philip?' he said. 'What have you been doing?'

'Father, the seed you have sown has borne bitter fruit.'

He spoke in a tone of mingled resentment and reproach.

'You mean that you have got into a scrape, and you want to throw it on me,' said his father, sarcastically.

Philip was silent. His father scrutinised him intently, and felt his pulse.

'H'm. Considerable fever and prostration,' he continued, 'produced apparently by great excitement. What have you been doing, eh?'

Still Philip gave no answer.

'I hope that you have not brought disgrace upon us.'

Philip's eyes glittered. 'It would not be easy to bring disgrace on you,' he thought.

'Come; what do you mean, Philip?' asked his father, noticing his look.

Philip was still silent.

‘If you have disgraced yourself, that was not my counsel.’

‘Your counsel. No, not your counsel,’ replied Philip, bitterly.

Mr. Lyndon’s answer was a torrent of abuse, which Philip bore for a few minutes in silence. He then begged his father to leave him; the latter, however, took no heed, until Philip started up, crying out, that if his father did not go he would; and he made a movement as if to jump out of bed, on which his father departed with an oath.

Tom appeared soon after with some medicine which his father had sent. He stayed a little while bathing Philip’s forehead, and then he was obliged to leave him, as he was wanted in the surgery. It was quite late in the day when Tom appeared at Mrs. Mansfield’s, looking grave, and rather pale.

‘Are you not well, Tom?’ asked Mrs. Mansfield.

‘Oh yes, I am all right; but Phil is ill. He has not been up to-day.’

‘I am sorry for that,’ said Stanton. ‘I hope he will soon be better.’

‘He says he will come down to-morrow,’ replied Tom; ‘but he will not be fit.’

‘How do you know?’ asked Harry.

‘You would know if you saw him,’ was the reply.

‘Does he look so ill?’ inquired Mrs. Mansfield.

‘He looks dreadful,’ said Tom. Then, turning to Stanton, he added: ‘He’s dreadfully worried about something.’

Tom, having given the Mansfields this hint, felt his mind very much relieved. Stanton, he thought, would thus be prepared to help when the catastrophe should happen; and, meanwhile, Blanche would comfort Phil, which she would surely do if she liked him. Mrs. Mansfield glanced at Blanche, who was very pale. There was a minute’s silence, which was broken by Stanton.

‘Would your brother like to see me, do you think?’ he asked of Tom.

‘Well, you might call in to-morrow, and see,’ suggested Tom. ‘I should think he’d be better quiet to-night; his head’s so dreadfully bad.’

‘How does your father think he is?’ asked Stanton.

‘I don’t know, I am sure,’ replied Tom. ‘He went up to see Phil this morning, but he was in a furious temper when he came down; and when I asked how Phil was, he only swore at him, so I said no more.’

‘I hope that you will never do that, Tom,’ said Mrs. Mansfield.

‘Well, I took to it a long time ago,’ was the reply; ‘but Phil heard me one day, and he said that I had better let him catch me at it again, and he would give me something to remember it by.’

‘And did he?’ asked Harry.

‘I never gave him a chance,’ answered Tom. ‘He does it himself, though, when he is very angry. But I must go and see how he is going on,’ he added, rising.

‘I suppose your sister will be with him,’ said Mrs. Mansfield.

‘He won’t have her, because she teased him when he would not let her go to the Hall,’ was Tom’s reply. ‘I told her how wrong it was to bother him,’ he added sagely.

‘Your brother is not right there, I think,’ said Stanton.

‘Well, when people are ill, if they can’t do with things, they can’t,’ was Tom’s logical reply, as he went away, Harry accompanying him.

‘A pretty mess they’ve got there,’ remarked Stanton. ‘I wonder what is up now?’

‘Tom does not know, I suppose, or he would most likely have told,’ replied Mrs. Mansfield.

‘I was rather surprised to hear him speak so frankly as he did just now.’

‘He looks upon us as friends. He has no one else to speak to, poor boy, and I dare say it is a relief to him to express his feelings. He has appealed to me in several little difficulties, because, as he said, he did not want “to bother Phil.”’

‘It is a good thing that he has you to confide in,’ she replied. ‘It is a very important point for a boy of his age to have some one to whom he can speak freely. I cannot help being sorry for Philip Lyndon,’ she added.

Stanton shook his head sadly, and then he fell into a profound meditation on the subject.

‘Oh, aunt,’ said Blanche, when her cousin happened to leave the room, ‘do you think that Tom is right, and that it is trouble that has made Mr. Philip ill?’

‘I cannot tell, my dear Blanche. We shall be better able to judge from Stanton’s report, if he sees him, to-morrow.’

‘I saw him for a few minutes last night,’ continued Blanche, ‘and he seemed brighter than he has done lately, I thought.’

‘Tom may be mistaken,’ said Mrs. Mansfield,

‘though I don’t think he is usually given to fancies.’

Blanche had an instinctive conviction that Tom’s theory was correct, though she tried to think that it was not.

‘Stanton has very good judgment,’ continued Mrs. Mansfield, ‘and he might be able to advise Mr. Philip. I don’t know whether he is above taking advice.’

Blanche felt very much afraid that advice would be of very little use, partly from the nature of the case, and partly from the nature of the individual.

‘Blanche,’ said Mrs. Mansfield, after a pause, ‘I want you to promise me one thing, and that is, that you will not allow yourself to be drawn into any engagement with Mr. Philip, or into any promise of a prospective engagement.’

‘I may safely promise that,’ replied Blanche. ‘I have not the slightest intention of any such thing, aunt, I can assure you.’

Mrs. Mansfield felt considerably relieved by her niece’s words. She knew that having once given her promise, Blanche would not allow herself to be entrapped into breaking it. An important bulwark had thus been raised against this persistent lover, and what

remained to be done was to keep them apart as much as possible, that Philip might not have an opportunity of deepening the impression which he appeared to have made.

CHAPTER XV.

THE INVALID.

‘I would have nothing but rest,
I would not struggle again;
Take me now to thy breast,
Earth, sweet mother of men.

‘This is the fate I crave,
For I look to the end, and see
If there be not rest in the grave,
There will never be rest for me.’

H. E. CLARKE.

It was past midnight. A white figure was perched on the side of Philip's bed. Tom had refused to leave his brother, who, however, had insisted on his not sitting up; so a compromise had been agreed upon, and Tom's bed had been brought into Philip's room. The invalid, however, had been very restless, and Tom had seemed as if he could not remain in bed.

‘Dear Phil,’ he said, ‘I wish I could do something for you.’

‘You can.’

‘What is it?’ cried Tom, his earnest face lighting with eager joy.

‘Love me, Tom,’ was the unexpected answer.

‘Oh, Phil, you know I do, and always shall.’

‘Whatever happens, Tom?’

‘Whatever happens.’

Tom threw his arms round his brother’s neck, and Philip wound his round Tom. The brothers lay for some minutes without speaking, Tom’s smooth cheek on Philip’s bearded face, and his fresh loving heart against his brother’s tortured one. But Philip could not lie long in the same position.

‘Tom, you have done me good,’ he said; ‘now get back to bed, and go to sleep.’

The first injunction was quickly obeyed, but it was longer before the second was; at length, however, the weariness caused by the extra strain which that day had brought, produced the desired result. Tom slept soundly for some hours. On waking he stole softly to look at Philip; he was sleeping—uneasily, it was true; but that he could sleep at all was a great satisfaction. Tom returned to bed with a thankful heart, and was soon asleep again, waking not until the first faint beams of a dripping February morning were stealing

through the window. Tom was up in a moment; Philip was awake, and very much exhausted. Tom dressed hastily, went downstairs, and soon returned with tea and toast, which he had the satisfaction of seeing his brother take.

Philip, though still very weak, got up about the middle of the day, and, contrary to Tom's earnest remonstrances, Mr. Lyndon, who was present, not saying a word, he set off in the dog-cart into the country. He managed to keep up till he was returning, when, after calling on a patient, as he attempted to get into the dog-cart, he fainted, and had to be taken into the cottage. The man returned with the dog-cart, and Tom went for his brother with a cab, after which he was consigned to bed again.

Stanton came in the evening, to the surgery, where he found Tom, who gave him an account of Philip's performances.

'Perhaps I had better not go up to-night,' said Stanton.

'Well, I will run up and ask him,' replied Tom; 'he may want to see you, you know.'

Stanton thought that it was very unlikely that Lyndon should wish particularly to see him; though he might be pleased with the attention shown in the call. However, when

Tom returned he said that Stanton might go up, and, leading the way to Philip's room, he left them together.

Philip's face looked thin and haggard ; it was deadly pale, and his dark eyes appeared unnaturally large and bright. He gave Stanton the impression that he had passed through a storm of feeling, which had shaken his whole being to its very depths, and beneath the violence of which his physical frame had for a time succumbed.

'I am glad to hear that you are better, Lyndon,' said Stanton.

'Yes, I am better, thank you.'

There was something in the look with which Philip regarded Stanton, that told of a hunger of the heart for sympathy and kindness, and that touched Stanton deeply.

'You have attempted too much to-day,' he said kindly.

'I shall keep quiet to-morrow, and then I dare say I shall be better. I was in a sad state yesterday. I don't know what I should have done without Tom. He is a good boy, Mansfield.'

'I am sure he is,' replied Stanton, earnestly.

'I have been thinking of many things while I have been lying here,' said Philip ; 'and if

anything should happen to me, it would comfort me if you would promise to look after him. I don't know what would become of him in such a case.'

'I will promise willingly to look after him,' replied Stanton. 'But surely your illness is not of so serious a nature as to suggest any such idea.'

'Oh no! I did not mean that. But one never knows what a day may bring forth, as your cousin would say.'

'Certainly not,' said Stanton, smiling.

'No. My time to die is not come yet,' resumed Philip. 'I must go through some more vain repentance and remorse—some more struggles against an inevitable fate—before I lie down to sleep the sleep that knows no waking.'

'I don't believe that what you call fate is inevitable, Lyndon.'

'He who sows the wind must reap the whirlwind,' replied Philip, bitterly.

'True repentance is surely not in vain,' said Stanton.

'True repentance. Well, but all repentance is not true. It is all very well for those to talk who have nothing to repent of.'

'I think I must send Ainslie to you.'

‘Oh, I’ll tackle him when I am better,’ said Philip.

‘You speak of death as the sleep that knows no waking ; you surely do not think that is the end of all.’

‘As far as I am concerned,’ replied Lyndon, ‘I do not much care to answer the question. When I have laid down the burden of my life, I don’t think that I shall have any wish to take it up again.’

Stanton was silent for a few minutes, occupied in sad thought.

‘But it is a cheerless prospect, Lyndon,’ he said, ‘and one not to be contemplated without a pang, to part for ever with all that we have held dear on earth.’

‘It has been my misfortune, or my fault,’ answered Philip, sadly, ‘to win but little love. Tom is the only one who would grieve overmuch for me ; and long, in all probability, before he joins the spirit-world, he will think of me as the brother who——’ he stopped, extremely agitated. ‘You must excuse me,’ he added, after a minute’s silence, and in a calmer tone, ‘but I am scarcely well enough to talk.’

‘I will see you again, Lyndon, in a day or two,’ said Stanton, in whose kind heart there

arose for Philip a feeling which he had never before experienced.

Philip forgot to ring for some one to show his visitor downstairs. Stanton, however, managed to find his way into the surgery.

‘You have not stayed long,’ said Tom, in some surprise.

‘He said that he was not well enough to talk, but I’ll look in another day.’

Tom scanned Stanton’s face inquiringly, but there was nothing in it to give the impression that anything particular had passed. Stanton looked kind and very grave.

‘Well,’ said Tom, with a sigh, ‘I hope you’ll cheer him up a little, for he’s very down-hearted.’

‘I will do what I can,’ said Stanton.

‘Father will have to look after the patients for a little while,’ continued Tom. ‘I am glad I ain’t one,’ he thought. ‘But hush ! here he is,’ he said aloud.

His quick ear had caught the sound of his father’s step in the passage before Stanton had heard it. As the door opened, Tom instinctively edged a little nearer to the outer door of the surgery.

‘Oh, Mr. Stanton, I am glad to see you,’ said Mr. Lyndon ; ‘but don’t stay here, come into the drawing-room.’

‘Not to-night, thank you. I came to inquire after your son.’

‘He is a little out of sorts, but he will soon be all right. He would have been better to-night if he had exercised a little common sense; but he will go on his own way. I am sure he will be obliged to you for inquiring after him.’

‘I think that his anxiety to fulfil his duties must plead for him,’ said Stanton.

‘Well, I cannot say that he lacks devotion to his profession,’ replied Mr. Lyndon, a little mollified. ‘But you might as well come in.’

Stanton, however, was not to be persuaded.

‘There is no doubt,’ he said to his mother on his return home, ‘that Lyndon has suffered terribly from some cause or other; and I thought at one moment that he was going to tell what it was, but he stopped in time. I must own that I was not sorry to escape the confession; though it is possible, that, had it been made, I might have been able to advise or at any rate to sympathise with him more effectually.’

‘Well,’ said his mother, ‘I think that you had better rather encourage than repel his confidence, for Blanche’s sake. I feel that we ought to know what this great trouble is that weighs on him so heavily.’

Soon after Stanton's departure from Mr. Lyndon's, there was a low tap at Philip's door, and Fanny asked if she might come in. On permission being given she entered, and came to the bedside. Her face was full of feeling, and the tears glistened in her eyes.

'Philip,' she said, 'I have been very wrong. Can you forgive me?'

'I was wrong, too, Fanny,' he answered, taking her hand. 'We must forgive each other.'

'Oh, Phil, I was so hurt yesterday when Tom told me that you did not want me.'

'Well, I did not know what you would say, and I could not bear it,' he replied. 'God knows, I need love and sympathy, Fanny, more than you can tell.'

Fanny bent down and kissed his forehead, and her tears fell on his cheek.

'I am afraid I have often been rough and harsh with you, Fanny,' he said.

'And I have got vexed, and have teased you, Philip; but I will not do it again. I have been so miserable since yesterday morning.'

'I am sorry,' he replied. 'I was wrong to say that I did not want you, though it was true at that moment,' he added; 'but it won't be again, if you are kind to me.'

‘May I stay?’ she asked.

‘Yes, dear Fanny.’

She fetched her work. Philip did not seem inclined to talk ; so she sat still, thinking. When Tom came up he stared to see who was there.

‘Oh, my !’ he said, standing in the doorway ;
‘I did not know that *you* were here.’

‘Come in ; Fanny won’t eat you,’ said Philip, smiling.

‘I don’t suppose she will. But I think I had better skedaddle, notwithstanding. We shall be too much for you both together.’

‘Be off, then. You look rather frisky.’

‘Do you think I could be spared to go to Mansfield’s for half-an-hour, Phil ?’

‘Of course you can. Do you think you are so important as all that ?’

The next day was Sunday, and wearily enough it passed to Philip. He could not read, and thinking was worse than useless. He ransacked his brain to contrive plans for seeing Blanche ; but as these invariably depended on circumstances over which he had no control, they ended in nothing but weariness of spirit. Fanny offered to stay with him, but he would not hear of it. Tom, now that ‘Phil’ was better, could no longer control the effervescence of his spirits. With great self-sacrifice he refrained

from tricks when Philip was present, but it seemed to be a physical impossibility for him to be still. Hands, feet, or tongue were sure to be in motion. He was fidgeting or wriggling continually, in one direction or another. Philip bore it until it became intolerable, and then Master Tom was banished from his presence in a very summary fashion, and Philip was left to his own reflections.

The curate called after school in the afternoon. His manner was courteous, and not unkind. He made one or two attempts to engage Philip in conversation on religious subjects, but the latter was on his guard, and was so reticent that Reginald was obliged to abandon his design. Philip knew that his theological doubts would meet with little consideration from Mr. Ainslie, and he was in no condition, either physical or mental, for the argument which would have been the inevitable result of such a conversation. As to making the curate the confidant of his deepest troubles, and expecting sympathy in them, it was an idea that never for a moment crossed his brain.

Ainslie did not stay long, and when he shook hands at parting, he ventured to suggest to Philip that he should be happy to see him at church a little oftener. Philip, who had not

made his appearance there since the offending sermon, replied, with some resentment in his tone, that he should go occasionally.

‘I suppose I must be civil to Lyndon,’ said Reginald, when he was at Mrs. Mansfield’s in the evening, ‘but I shall never make anything of him. He is not only hard and unresponsive, but he treats every attempt to influence him as an infraction of his rights. He needs to be made to feel his own shortcomings and deficiencies, and that he is wanting in the very first elements of the religious life. But the stubborn ground of his audacious self-conceit and of his rebellious temper must be broken up before the good seed can be sown.’

All recognised that there was some truth in Reginald’s picture, though three of the party felt that there were gleams of light in the background that the curate had not perceived.

‘It would do him good to have his proud spirit brought down a little,’ said George.

‘I doubt whether adversity in material things would effect the transformation,’ replied Reginald. ‘He would stand up against the rod, and be the more defiant in his impiety the more he was afflicted. It is in the spiritual nature that the change must first begin, but how that is to be brought about it passes me to imagine.’

Blanche had a secret feeling that she knew how it could be done, though she dreaded to undertake the task.

‘I don’t think that he is altogether so bad as you imagine,’ remarked Stanton, who felt that he could not let Reginald’s judgment of Lyndon pass altogether unquestioned. ‘I have seen signs in him of some feeling, which, if it could be approached in a right way, might lead to something better.’

‘I have not,’ replied the curate, who was a little annoyed that Stanton should have been able to discover that for which he had looked in vain. ‘But he seems to harden himself against me, somehow.’

Both Blanche and Stanton could not help feeling that it was Reginald’s want of sympathy with Philip, which repelled him and made it impossible for him to lay bare his inmost feelings before the curate.

‘I think that we are wasting a great deal of thought upon one who really is not worth it,’ observed George.

‘Nay, George,’ replied Reginald. ‘A sinner, as long as there is the slightest hope that one can do him good, is worth any amount of thought and trouble. When that is hopeless, the only way is to cast him out from among us.’

‘Who is to decide as to when the case is hopeless?’ asked Mrs. Mansfield.

‘That is a difficult question,’ replied her nephew, ‘and it is not for any mortal finally to decide. Still, in our conduct towards men, some difference must be made between those who follow the Lord and those who openly defy His will. I really think that the next time I am ill I shall send for Mr. Wood.’

‘That would be a very marked sign of disapproval,’ said Mrs. Mansfield.’

‘Nevertheless, in the circumstances I think it will be justifiable.’

Reginald glanced at his sister as he spoke, and the colour that flushed on her cheek, and the evident distress which he detected in her countenance, strengthened him in his resolution.

‘You are right, Reginald,’ said George, approvingly; ‘and, if my advice were taken, the same course would be pursued here.’

‘Nay, I should not think that right,’ replied Mrs. Mansfield, ‘at present, at any rate. I should see how he goes on for a time.’

‘I think that is the most fair, as we have got him,’ observed Stanton. ‘We ought not to quench the smoking flax, Reginald.’

‘But suppose your flax is stubble?’

‘One may suppose anything; and a supposi-

tion is not an established fact,' answered Stanton. 'There was something about him,' he continued, 'that struck me very much when I was there last night. There was an expression of endurance in his countenance which suggested to my mind the look that one might fancy in the face of a wounded lion.'

'Lion, indeed! I think he is much more like a bear,' exclaimed Reginald; at which they all laughed. 'But however that may be,' he added, 'you are perfectly right in likening his endurance, as you call it, to that which is displayed by the beasts that perish, rather than to the patient resignation of a Christian.'

CHAPTER XVI.

THE REPULSE.

“Oh, rare lips !” he said,
“That I have never kissed ; from whose sweet gates
Have issued not one stammering word of love,
Although I listened always—eyes that ne’er
Have brightened at my coming, or grown dim
With grief at my departure—tender cheeks,
Twin lilies, that have worn but one aspect
To all my looks and words.”

H. MATHER.

DURING the course of the following week Philip became very much stronger, notwithstanding that he allowed himself little leisure. He seemed to be possessed by a restlessness that would admit of no relaxation. On the few occasions when he had met George he had encountered a glance, that brought back forcibly to his mind the remembrance of their interview at the Hall, and produced in him a state of feeling which it was very difficult to endure.

He felt an intense anxiety to speak to Blanche, and get her, if possible, to consent to some more established relations between them. He knew that it would be a very hazardous move to make, but he thought that it would be impossible for him to let her leave the neighbourhood without, at any rate, making the attempt. He knew that she was going soon, but when he did not know ; that, he felt sure, would be studiously concealed from him.

It happened, while Philip was in this state of uncertainty, that Mrs. Mansfield's housemaid was taken ill. On his first being summoned he saw Mrs. Mansfield, and was able to assure her that the girl's illness was not a serious one. On his second visit he saw no one but the cook. He had left the house, and was passing along the gravel walk towards the gate, when, between the trees, he caught a glimpse of a grey dress, which he at once recognised as that of Blanche. Here was a chance, perhaps the only one before she went, of speaking to her alone. He turned quickly, and walked across the grass towards her.

Blanche had been transplanting some violets which had overrun their bounds, and as she turned to look for the rake, she became aware of Philip's approach. Her heart beat violently, and the colour came flushing to her cheek ; but

she had time, during the minute that elapsed before he was at her side, to regain her composure.

‘Miss Ainslie,’ Philip said, ‘you must allow me, if you please, to speak to you before you go.’

She was standing close to a rustic arbour, over which clambered a woodbine, whose young tender leaves were green with the promise of the spring, while at its foot the early primroses nestled among their wrinkled foliage.

‘Circumstances have altered since I spoke to you before,’ he said, ‘which make it advisable that we should come to an understanding.’

He was evidently trying to state his wishes in a calm, unimpassioned manner, and to put them in as reasonable a shape as possible, so as not to cause alarm.

‘I don’t see, Mr. Lyndon,’ replied Blanche, ‘what alteration can very well be made.’

‘You are going away, most likely for a considerable time,’ he said, ‘and my affairs are in a very uncertain state, and I wish to consult you about them ; but, in the first place, may I ask you if you will give me hope that at some future time you will listen to me?’

Though he spoke in steady, measured tones, Blanche could perceive in him the evidence of deep, but strongly repressed emotion.

‘Mr. Lyndon, I cannot,’ she replied firmly. ‘You have my sympathy, and you may look upon me as a friend ; but further than that I cannot go.’

‘Then I may lose you !’ he said. ‘Another may woo and win you, and I must tamely submit ?’

Blanche could not help thinking that the term was a singularly inappropriate one.

‘I have given you no right to ask such a thing,’ she said.

‘I have a right to suffer, and to despair, but not to hope,’ he cried impetuously.

‘Be calm, Mr. Lyndon ; you need not despair.’

His face brightened ; but, as he glanced at her, he saw that she did not mean it in reference to herself, and it darkened again.

‘There is no knowing, Miss Ainslie,’ he said, ‘what may have happened before you return.’

She looked at him in some alarm.

‘If you would let me hope,’ he continued, ‘it would help me to go through this trouble ; and if it came to the very worst, you would be released from your promise.’

Blanche shuddered as he spoke, and her cheek grew deadly pale.

‘Don’t be alarmed, love,’ he murmured. ‘I hope that it may pass.’

How he longed to fold her in his arms as she stood beside him. If she would but give him one word of hope, and let him press one kiss upon her lips, he thought he could endure whatever might be coming. Blanche instinctively divined his wish, and she moved a little farther from him.

‘Blanche !’ he cried, in an agony of supplication, ‘give me your love !’

‘You promised that you would not ask,’ she said reproachfully.

‘Give me hope, then, and I will say no more.’

Blanche almost wished that she had not promised her aunt so readily ; and yet she thought, that an arrangement of the kind for which he wished would be equal to an engagement, and he would be constantly struggling to obtain the privileges of a lover. The only way really to avoid an engagement, however cruel it might seem, was to keep him at a distance.

‘It is impossible, Mr. Lyndon. You know how much my friends would disapprove of anything of the kind, and you ought not to ask it.’

‘But it would not be an engagement. I

could not ask for that in my present circumstances.'

'It would be something like one.'

'And you would sacrifice me to a question of conventional propriety?' he cried.

'It is not a question of propriety, but of right and wrong,' she answered, with some dignity.

'I don't see that,' he said hastily.

'It would, practically, be a secret engagement, Mr. Lyndon, and my conscience would condemn such a course.'

'Your conscience would not condemn your driving me to despair, Miss Ainslie?'

'It is not I that drive you to despair. It is your own mad folly,' she replied, goaded by his importunity.

Philip stood with the various emotions of love, pride, shame, and anger, struggling in his countenance. Blanche did not look at him.

'Will you allow me to pass, Mr. Lyndon?' she said.

He, however, did not move.

'We must not part thus,' he said, almost desperately.

'You had better say no more until you are calmer,' she replied.

'Will you tell me where I can see you, then?'

'No, I cannot do that.'

‘Then you must hear me.’

‘Mr. Lyndon,’ said Blanche, looking straight at him. ‘You wish me to give you a promise which all my friends would condemn, and which you, if your sister were in similar circumstances, would be the first to blame, and to make her break if you had the power. Is it honourable or gentlemanly to press me so much, when I have already told you what I can give you, and that I can give no more?’

‘Miss Ainslie, I see that you do not love me. Pardon me if I have been so presumptuous as to think that my love had called forth some return. You may meet with a worthier love, but not a more devoted one, than that of the bruised heart which you scorn!’

‘I do not scorn you,’ said Blanche, touched by his tone.

‘You do not love me, or you would give me hope.’

‘Let me pass, Mr. Lyndon!’ cried Blanche, impatiently. She felt vexed by his pertinacity, and she was afraid that her secret would be forced from her. She could not say that she did not love him. He moved a little out of her way, but at the same time he took her hand.

‘Blanche! my own!’ he said tenderly.

At that moment Stanton crossed the lawn, and came towards them. He had evidently heard Blanche's request and Philip's answer. Blanche sprang forwards towards him with delight, while Philip's eyes glittered with an expression that horrified Stanton.

Philip's first thought was, that Stanton had prevented Blanche from listening to and at last consenting to his love ; but the relief with which she had hailed the appearance of her cousin made him change his opinion, and he stood still, his heart filled with mortification, indignation, and despair.

Blanche almost flew into the house, and the two gentlemen stood face to face.

'Mr. Lyndon,' said Stanton, indignantly, 'I am surprised that you should detain a lady against her will. Such conduct is——'

'You may spare your comments, Mr. Mansfield,' replied Philip, haughtily ; 'Miss Ainslie need fear me no more. I shall never speak to her again upon a subject in which she is so little interested.'

'That is well,' was the reply. 'I hope you will keep your resolution, Mr. Lyndon.'

Philip raised his hat with ceremonious politeness, and walked out of the garden.

Blanche had scarcely had time to compose

herself a little when the luncheon-bell rang. She thought it best to come down at once, as by that means she would attract the least attention. She had just reached the dining-room door when Stanton came out of the breakfast-room, saying that he wished to speak to her. She followed him, with the colour deepening on her cheek.

‘What was Lyndon up to, just now, Blanche?’ he asked.

‘Oh, he wanted me to——’

‘To love him, eh?’

‘He did not exactly ask to be engaged,’ replied Blanche, without looking up; ‘but he wished me to agree to be engaged sometime.’

‘Not an unreasonable request, he thinks, I dare say, looked at from his point of view,’ thought Stanton. ‘I did not know what was happening,’ he said aloud, ‘you sounded so desperate, and rushed off in such hot haste. He might have been going to run away with you, against your will, like a knight of old, for anything I could tell.’

‘He was so persistent,’ replied Blanche, ‘that he vexed me.’

‘And I suppose you did not agree to what

he wished, and that vexed him,' said Stanton. —'If he could see your face now,' he thought, 'he would not be so angry.—You managed to find some roses in the garden, Blanche,' he said aloud, 'though I did not know that there were any out.'

Philip felt, as he walked home, that all was indeed over between himself and Blanche. He had lost her. What he had mistaken for love was merely the emotion which had been excited by the ardour of his own affection. If he had not now won her love by his passionate devotion, it showed that her heart was cold, at least to him, and that nothing which he could do would enable him to win her. He felt that his life was blighted. The sweet hopes which he had cherished were dead. The light that his love had kindled round his path was changed to darkness. The delicious fruit had turned to ashes, like the Dead Sea apples. The tender joy and the hush of reverent feeling which he had felt when at her side—the exquisite thrill of a happiness of which even to dream seemed too good for earth—the glow of delight which he had felt as her cheek flushed at his tale of love—the balm which soothed his heart when her voice softened into the tones of pity—

all were over now. Mad folly indeed it was ; he would be guilty of it no more ; he would crush the strong deep love from his heart, until not a spark remained to tell what once had been.

He went on his rounds slowly, like one in a dream. Instead of coming in to dinner he went to his own room, complaining of a headache. Tom soon found out that something was the matter. Philip was not cross, but he was evidently unhappy, and he would have no sympathy, which Tom thought was a very bad sign.

Several days passed in this way, Philip secluding himself almost entirely from the rest of the family. Fanny made a vain attempt to comfort him and to show her sympathy, and then she left him to his fate.

Tom confided his troubles about his brother to Harry, and Harry related them to Stanton, but that gentleman kept his own counsel, and no light was thrown upon the matter.

Blanche, in the meantime, was quite unconscious of the impression that her joy at her escape from him, and her precipitate flight, had made upon her lover. Her own feeling was one of congratulation, that she still had possession

of the secret which she so dreaded that he might discover. She had had several narrow escapes, but now that she was so soon going away, all danger of that was over for the present.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE REVEREND REGINALD.

‘ To win his flock from sin
Was all his care. He grudg’d nor toil, nor pain,
To lead the erring on the path to heaven.’

THE PRIEST.

THE Reverend Reginald Ainslie was on his way one afternoon to a suburb of the town, that was occupied exclusively by farmhouses and by the cottages of the labourers connected with them, and of that low class of the population which cluster more or less numerously in the neighbourhood of every town. He had cast a longing eye, whenever he had happened to pass that way, on the mud-walled cottages and their besotted and ignorant inhabitants, who offered any imaginable scope for missionary labours. But unfortunately, this desirable portion of the community was in another parish, the clergyman of which,

though very devoted in his labours, did not carry them out according to a preconceived plan of Reginald's, which needed but the promising ground of some such enviable region as was this one, to make it bloom in full proportion.

The curate, therefore, had been obliged to content himself with his own parish, which, however, did not afford him anything like the scope for which he sighed. He did not resign himself to this state of things until he had devised a plan which lessened the temptation that he was under to break the tenth commandment, and that was the institution of a temperance movement, to include the whole town. His own rector, and also the rector of the coveted parish, were willing to second Reginald's plans, on condition that the latter took upon himself the work connected therewith, which was just what the curate wanted. By these means he had gained an ever widening hold upon the people, had established a Band of Hope, and had instituted a course of temperance lectures under the patronage of the rector.

It happened on this particular afternoon, that, as the curate was walking down the barn and haystack-lined road which led to this suburb, he came upon two youths, who were at that

moment occupying their fists in pummelling each other, on the strength of a dispute about a pint of beer. Fighting, in whatever aspect it presented itself, always excited in Reginald's mind a feeling of intense repugnance ; whether it was as the murderous onslaught of the serried ranks of the battlefield, the half-playful skirmish of two schoolboys, or in the form that was now before him.

Actuated by these sentiments, Reginald walked up to the two combatants, and commenced what he intended to be a powerful exhortation on the sin which his hearers were committing, at the same time, in his earnestness, laying his hand on the arm of the one who appeared to be the most determined. The combatants stopped at once, and then, considerably to the dismay of the curate, they commenced an attack upon himself. How the matter would have ended, had not help arrived, it would be difficult to say, for the cultivation of Reginald's combative propensities being limited to that of his tongue and of his pen, he was no match for his sturdy adversaries. Fortunately for him, however, but a few minutes had passed when Philip Lyndon came out of a cottage farther down the road. He was on the point of turning in the opposite direc-

tion, when his eye fell upon the little group before mentioned, just as the curate, tripped up by one of the youths, measured his length upon the ground. A few quick strides brought Philip to the scene of action, and a few blows of his fist, dealt with scientific accuracy and skill, sent the assailants of the curate to the right-about.

‘That was hardly a fair contest, two against one,’ observed Philip, as he helped Reginald to his feet. ‘I hope that you are not much hurt.’

‘Only a few bruises, I think,’ replied the curate, as he rubbed the mud off his coat with his handkerchief. ‘I must thank you for coming to my assistance. How did you manage to dispose of them so quickly?’

‘I think you must have half beaten them before I came,’ replied Philip. ‘Are you able to walk home? Will you take my arm?’

‘I shall manage, thank you,’ answered Reginald, refusing the offered help, partly from dislike of attracting the attention which his walking arm-in-arm with Lyndon would excite, and partly from his dislike of the individual himself. Philip readily divined both these motives of the curate’s refusal.

‘You will allow me to walk with you, at any rate, Mr. Ainslie,’ he said, with rather a grim smile, which did not very well please Reginald.

Ten minutes brought them to Victoria Terrace ; Blanche, who had been paying a visit there, in preparation for her journey, was just coming out of the garden-gate.

‘ Oh, Reginald ! What is the matter ? ’ she cried, the colour which had come in her face at the first sight of Philip fading away as she noticed her brother’s paleness.

‘ Don’t be alarmed, Blanche ; there is not much the matter,’ replied her brother.

‘ I found him fighting gallantly with a couple of sturdy labourers,’ Philip explained.

‘ I did not do much fighting, I am sure,’ interposed Reginald.

‘ I did not see the commencement of the battle,’ continued Philip ; ‘ so I don’t know how it began, or who gave the cause of provocation.’

Philip gave Blanche rather a savage glint out of the corners of his eyes as they went in, but she was intent on Reginald, and did not notice him. He thought how little she would have troubled herself had he been the injured one, instead of Reginald, and how little she cared what wounds she inflicted on his heart, which were much more hard to bear than any mere bodily pain. Philip ordered Reginald to bed, and pronounced that though there was

nothing very serious the matter with him, he would feel the effects of the encounter for some time to come. Having delivered this opinion, he marched off, with much more grimness in his manner, Blanche thought, than the occasion appeared to warrant.

The next morning, as Philip was riding down the street, he met Stanton, and he reined in his horse to speak to him.

‘I suppose you have heard of Ainslie’s adventure?’ he said.

‘Oh yes. I have just been to see him.’

‘How is he?’

‘He says that he is better; but he seems far from well.’

‘I don’t know how it happened, for I did not see the row begin,’ observed Philip; ‘but if he gave the youths such a sour look as he gave me, there might be a little excuse for them, though they ought to have taken him one at a time, and when he had demolished one, the other might have come on.’

‘I hope that you did not feel inclined to fight him on account of the sour look, as you call it,’ said Stanton, laughing.

‘Well, it was hardly worth while to knock him down when I had just picked him up,’ was the reply.

Philip did not know how tender, in practice, the curate really was with regard to the shortcomings of the poorer classes, though against sin in general he was severe enough. He considered that the uneducated part of the community were not in a condition to profit by those moral influences which alone can make man master of his own actions, and, therefore, a truly responsible being. On the cultured sinner, who acted in defiance of the light vouchsafed to him, Reginald had no mercy; and he had several times fallen into disgrace with the rector for his bold rebukes of wealthy parishioners, for whom the rector was apt to indulge a rather sentimental tenderness.

‘He is coming to our house to-day,’ said Stanton; ‘so you had better look in there to see him.’

‘He would have been better quiet for a day or two, as he is rather mauled,’ replied the doctor.

‘He can be as quiet as he likes,’ said Stanton; ‘and my mother and Harry can look after him. He would be alone at Victoria Terrace, for his sister is starting for the Lakes directly, and I am going with her for a week or two. But if I don’t make haste we shall miss the train.’

He hurried away, and Philip rode on slowly.

‘She is going, then,’ he thought; and his heart seemed to die within him. What might he not have gone through before her return!

He called at Mrs. Mansfield’s in the evening. Harry went upstairs with him, and then brought him into the drawing-room, as Mrs. Mansfield wished to hear his report. Philip said that the only thing which would be likely to be troublesome was a bruise on the head, that Ainslie said he had received in his fall by striking against the wall. This blow, Philip thought, would inconvenience him for some time.

‘I suppose,’ he added, ‘that he will have the fellows up as soon as he is able to appear. Of course, I shall willingly give my evidence on the matter.’

‘He has no intention of that,’ replied Mrs. Mansfield.

‘Indeed! Why not?’

‘On the principle, I suppose, that if any one strikes you on the right check, you should turn to him the other also.’

‘I thought that sort of thing was not attempted nowadays, whatever it might have been in the times of the Apostles,’ replied Philip, in some surprise.

It was a new idea to him, as far as the appli-

cation of the precept was concerned, though of course he had heard it read in church ; and while he had listened to exhortations on the beauty of meekness, had thought that it was all very well in theory, but that no one would ever think of realising it. He had been rather inclined to despise the curate, but he now came to the conclusion that a man who carried out his principles in such a thorough-going fashion was, at any rate, entitled to respect.

‘ I think that is going a little too far,’ observed George, who on Philip’s entrance had honoured him with a courteous greeting, which had been returned somewhat stiffly by that gentleman ; ‘ but Reginald is decidedly Quixotic.’

‘ Well, it would be rather hard lines for ordinary mortals, whose nature is unregenerate,’ observed Philip ; ‘ but it would make the world pleasanter to live in,’ he added musingly.

‘ I don’t know that,’ said George. ‘ It would not be particularly pleasant for one man to be allowed to murder another without fear of consequences—not for the one who was murdered, at any rate, though the other might enjoy it.’

‘ It would knock your business on the head,’ answered Philip, grimly. ‘ While human nature remains what it is,’ he continued, ‘ there will be men who will feel pleasure in hunting down an

enemy and torturing him, in much the same way as a cat does a mouse. I hope,' he added, turning to Mrs. Mansfield, 'that Mr. Ainslie will meet with no more encounters of this kind.'

'I hope not,' she replied. 'He was on his way to the house of one of these young fellows at the time, and he will go there as soon as he can. I shall be a little anxious until it is over. He will have it that they would not have done it, if it had not been for the beer.'

'Well, he is very charitable, I am sure. I hope that, with a little nursing, he will soon be better.'

'You look as if you wanted nursing, too, Mr. Lyndon,' said Mrs. Mansfield. 'I am afraid you work too hard.'

'I shall be better soon,' he replied, in a tone of great indifference about it.

'How ill he looks,' remarked Mrs. Mansfield when he was gone.

'Tom says that he does work too hard,' said Harry, 'and that he is not well at all, and that his father does not attend to any of the patients now ; and it is a great shame,' he added indignantly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GEORGE'S ACCIDENT.

‘The coward wretch whose hand and heart
Can bear to torture aught below,
Is ever first to quail and start
From slightest pain or equal foe.’

E. COOK.

IN about a fortnight Mr. Ainslie was very much better, and he went to join Blanche in Westmoreland. Philip did not deign to inquire after Miss Ainslie, greatly to Mrs. Mansfield's surprise. When she had been away before he had made many inquiries, and had always seemed so pleased to hear that she was better. He did not himself show much sign of improvement. He went about his work as energetically as ever, but when that was over he seemed as if he had no heart for anything else, and generally shut himself up in the consulting-room.

Philip was sitting one evening over his dinner

--he generally dined late, that he might be alone--when Tom came from the surgery with the news that George Mansfield had been thrown from his horse in hunting, and had been brought home dreadfully hurt.

'Did they say that I was to go?' asked Philip.

'Of course,' replied Tom, looking at his brother in some surprise.

Philip rose and went into the surgery like one in a dream. Was it a mistake? Or perhaps George thought that he was going to die, and wished to see him that he might express his sorrow for the past. He took his way along the Walks with a quivering heart and an unsteady step. Mrs. Mansfield met him in the hall, and, even in the midst of her anxiety for her son, she could not help being struck by the expression of Philip's countenance, as he grew pale and red by turns. George was insensible, but under the influence of restoratives he revived a little. As soon, however, as he perceived whose was the hand that ministered to him he nearly fainted again.

'Don't be alarmed. I won't hurt you,' said Philip, with a little contempt in his tone.

'It is impossible for you to help that, I should imagine,' observed Mrs. Mansfield, thinking

that he referred to the dressing of the injuries.

‘Well, not more than I can help,’ answered Philip, in a suppressed tone.

‘Send for Dr. Morton,’ muttered George, as soon as he could speak.

‘I will telegraph for him,’ was Lyndon’s reply.

He then proceeded to examine his patient, who manifested such a repugnance to the touch of the young surgeon’s hand as to rouse his ire and make it difficult for him to maintain composure which was needful for the execution of his task.

‘Be still, Mansfield,’ said Lyndon imperiously, as George shrank away from him in evident fear, cowering before him as a rated hound cowers before his master. Philip would not let him speak, except in answer to his questions, until he had finished his task, and almost forced him to take some medicine which he had directed to be made up while he had been attending to his patient.

‘Now, what do you want to say?’ he asked, fixing his eyes full on George’s face.

‘When will Dr. Morton come?’

‘In the morning, I expect.’

‘I may be dead by that time.’

‘You won’t be dead by morning.’

‘Shall I get better?’ asked George, imploringly.

‘Can’t say,’ was the rather gruff reply.

Philip scanned George’s face eagerly, but he was evidently thinking solely of himself, and the only feeling he had with regard to the presence of Philip was that of aversion, and of dread of his revenge. There was no compunction for the injury which he had done him, or pity for the sufferings that he had caused. It was plain enough that no communication was forthcoming: if he were to die it would be, apparently, without any remorseful feeling for the past. Philip turned away from his inspection with a sigh, and gave his directions to Mrs. Mansfield, with a request that he should be sent for in case of an unfavourable change.

‘Poor, cowardly wretch!’ he muttered with disdainful contempt as he walked away. ‘Does he think that I would condescend to shorten his miserable life? He may crawl a little longer on the earth, as far as I am concerned.’

George seemed to breathe more freely when Lyndon was gone. He lay without speaking for a few minutes, and then he said:

‘Mother, I always told you that I would never have Lyndon.’

‘My dear George,’ she replied, ‘young Scott, who came with you when you were brought home, reported that the first words which you spoke when you came to yourself, were, “Send for Lyndon.”’

‘I said, “*Don’t* send for him,”’ replied George, very impatiently.

‘Well, it can’t be helped now,’ said his mother; ‘and he’s very clever.’

‘I *hate* to have him near me!’ muttered George, in a tone which certainly gave colour to his words.

‘My dear George,’ said Mrs. Mansfield, soothingly, ‘don’t put yourself about. We shall have Dr. Morton in the morning.’

She could not understand George’s intense dislike of Lyndon, nor Lyndon’s gruffness, nor the peculiar repression of manner that he had shown. George passed a miserable night. During the intervals in which the extreme severity of his pain abated, he revolved in his mind the various ways in which Lyndon held his life in his power. Even under the watchful eye of Dr. Morton, how easy it would be, he thought, in his present uncertain state, for Lyndon to aggravate some unfavourable symptom, to increase, by skilful management, the weakness under which he was labouring,

or otherwise to tamper with the case in a manner that would not excite suspicion. Might he not even now have taken measures which would render his case a hopeless one, and would doom him, in the prime of his life, to a premature and miserable death? Even the fact of Lyndon's cleverness, with which Mrs. Mansfield had sought to cheer her son, served but to increase his apprehensions; for it would enable Lyndon to have recourse to means at which a man of weaker mind or of more timid nature might hesitate. Harassed by these reflections, George was, when the morning came, in a more unfavourable state than was expected by Philip, who called on his way to the station to meet Dr. Morton. Being a personal friend of the family, the doctor remained after the consultation was over and Lyndon had departed. At George's request he was summoned to his room.

'Lyndon says,' observed the doctor, as George lay still without speaking, 'that you would have been better this morning if you had kept your mind quiet during the night; and he asked me to impress upon you the very great necessity there is for your so doing.'

'To tell the truth,' replied George, 'I do not

like my doctor, and I want you to keep a sharp watch over him.

‘Indeed!’ said Dr. Morton, in some surprise.

‘He owes me a grudge,’ continued George, ‘and he is not a man to forget that.’

‘You may make your mind easy about him,’ replied the doctor, smiling. ‘He is an honourable man, and would not, I believe, be guilty of a mean action on any consideration. Besides, you have left out of your calculations Mr. Lyndon’s professional pride, which would make him strain every nerve to save the life of even his direst enemy, were he entrusted to his care.’

‘Well, doctor,’ said George, who was a little comforted by this view of the case, ‘I hope you will keep a sharp look-out over him, notwithstanding.’

‘I wonder what villany you have been up to?’ thought Dr. Morton, as he drove to the station. ‘It seems to be something by which you have come into collision with Lyndon, at any rate.’

The doctor being a man of great knowledge of the world, and a shrewd judge of character, George had not been able, by the utmost exercise of caution and duplicity, to keep him entirely in the dark. Little incidents which by another would have passed unnoticed, a trifling change

of voice, or a passing play of expression, had at different times been marked and mentally commented on, until the doctor had arrived at a tolerably correct estimate of George Mansfield's character. Of Lyndon, except in his professional capacity, Dr. Morton had seen little ; but the intercourse which he had had with him had excited the admiration of the doctor. The patient investigation, the medical skill, and the clear, sound judgment which he showed in the management of a case, as well as the untiring energy and industry with which he followed his profession, were qualities that procured for Lyndon the ready appreciation of Dr. Morton ; while, on the other hand, the characteristics of an impetuous temper, and of an outspoken, though sometimes rather rough, manner, gave evidence of a frankness of nature that would incline him, should his character not rise quite to the accepted level, not to conceal the fact.

When Dr. Morton came, on the following day, he found George a little better, and though he was not labouring under the same degree of excitement as he had been at first, his mind was very far from being in that calm state of repose which was so desirable in the circumstances. The doctor, after accompanying Lyndon to see another of his patients, returned

with him to dinner, and they sat some time over their wine discussing cases, and talking over the latest scientific discoveries.

‘You do not appear to have made altogether a favourable impression on my friend Mansfield,’ observed the doctor to Philip, as soon as his father had left the room.

‘He is not, as the people here say, “turble fond” of me, certainly,’ was the reply.

‘And your sentiments with regard to him are ——?’

‘A reciprocation of his to me, with a difference.’

‘Leaving out the fear, I suppose, for he seems to be mortally afraid of you.’

‘I have reason to fear him,’ replied Philip. ‘He fears me because he has injured me. He fears my revenge.’

‘But if he has injured you, you can expose him,’ said Dr. Morton, watching Lyndon’s countenance narrowly.

‘That is what he fears. I may yet do it, if I am driven to it,’ replied Philip, with a gleam in his eye that was not pleasant to see. ‘But I do not wish to do it if he will let me alone. Besides, he has got his thumb on me.’

‘He looks more as if you had got your thumb on him,’ remarked the other.

Philip was silent.

‘Well, if you will confide in me, I will see what I can do to put things on a more satisfactory footing.’

‘It is very kind of you to make such an offer,’ replied Lyndon, taken by surprise at this evidence of Dr. Morton’s interest in his affairs, ‘but if things will right themselves without my troubling you, it will be better.’

‘Well, you are the best judge, I dare say. But don’t forget where you have a friend who will be glad to help you if the time should come.’

Dr. Morton, guessing pretty correctly what was the state of Lyndon’s health, urged him to go from home for a few weeks’ change, which advice, however, he resolutely refused. He felt that keeping on with his work was the only way to prevent his mind from breaking down altogether; and that enforced idleness, or an attempt to fill up his time in the pursuit of pleasure, would aggravate rather than diminish the evil.

Stanton, who had been telegraphed for at the time of the accident, arrived on the following morning, and proved a most devoted nurse to his brother. He noted, with great regret, the evidence which George gave of the depth of his detestation of Lyndon. When Dr. Morton

sounded Stanton on the subject, he frankly acknowledged it, though he was as far as was his questioner from being able to account for it.

How George longed to get rid of Lyndon by almost any means! 'Old Wood' or anybody would have been preferable, but it would be necessary, if that course were taken, to offer some reasonable excuse for such a step : besides, if he had any idea of really putting his threat in force, it would be advisable to allow as little evidence as possible to appear of the real state of feeling between himself and Lyndon. George feared that already too much had been perceived by Dr. Morton. With regard to his own friends, he thought that he could easily invent some plausible story, if need were, to account for it, but the doctor would not be so soon hoodwinked. He determined that, as soon as he could be moved, he would get out of Lyndon's reach, and would not return to the neighbourhood until his health was perfectly restored. He was rather surprised when Philip proposed the same course, even urging its adoption almost before Dr. Morton thought it advisable.

There were many fluctuations in George's health, as though his very anxiety to go prevented him from gaining the needful strength ;

but at last it seemed as if the desired consummation was likely to be reached.

‘I think, now, Mr. Mansfield, that you need feel no hesitation in starting to-morrow, if you are as well in the morning as you are now,’ said Philip, as he rose to go, on the evening before the day that had been fixed for George’s departure.

‘We shall part with mutual satisfaction, I believe, Lyndon,’ observed George, who felt that he could not leave without giving a stab to Philip for the annoyance that his presence had caused him.

Philip looked at him with an expression of regret and pain mingling in his dark eyes. In spite of all that had passed between them, he would fain have parted with a kindly word from one whom he had watched returning, as it were, from the very shadow of the grave, and to save whose life he had exerted his utmost skill and knowledge. George, however, had no feeling. He saw before him only his determined enemy, who would willingly have availed himself of this opportunity to take advantage of his weakness, could he have done so undetected.

‘It would be well if we could also meet with satisfaction,’ replied Philip, sadly.

‘The satisfaction is likely to be only on my side when we meet again,’ said George.

‘I have missed my satisfaction,’ answered Philip, grimly.

‘Mine is to come,’ rejoined George, ‘unless you will agree to my conditions.’

‘Never!’ cried Lyndon, fiercely.

There seemed to be little likelihood of his ever winning Blanche, but for all that he scorned to yield to the menaces of George.

‘Good-bye, then,’ said George, insolently. ‘Before we meet again you will hear of something not exactly “to your advantage.”’

Philip’s answer was a look of haughty defiance, as he walked out of the room.

George’s words recalled to his mind the kind offer of Dr. Morton, and he debated with himself whether or not he should take advantage of it. It was just possible, he thought, that if the whole case were laid before the doctor, he, as a friend of Mansfield’s—one, too, who from his age and experience, added to his long connection with the family, would be sure to have considerable influence with him—might be able to prevent him from going to extremities. On the other hand, when Dr. Morton should become aware of the nature of the facts, he might not only refuse to lend his aid, but he might

consider that the fate which was hanging over the culprit's head was but a just punishment for his sins. Even were he likely to take a less severe view of the case, Philip had an unconquerable aversion from making another confession. The doctor would not shrink from him as Blanche had done, but he might feel not the less detestation of the crime. Philip reflected also, that it was probable, as George's words indicated, that the *dénouement* would take place before his return; the train was already laid, and needed only the application of the match to bring the dreaded destruction upon its victim. In that case it would be useless to apply to Dr. Morton, especially as he would not be likely to see George again at present. The advantages of confiding in the doctor seemed, all things considered, to be so very intangible, and the disadvantages so unequivocal, that Lyndon decided to keep on his present course, and to give no sign that he expected the menace to be put in practice.

It was late that evening when Harry sought the surgery, where Philip was busy over his books. Tom was standing, leaning against the counter, in an unusually meditative mood. Philip did not raise his head on the entrance of Harry, who asked Tom in a low voice

whether he could come out with him ; and the next minute they were going down the Walks.

‘ So we are to be off at last,’ were Harry’s first words.

‘ Well, I *am* sorry,’ replied Tom, energetically. ‘ It’s enough to give a fellow a fit of the blues, that it is,’ he added, a little impatiently. ‘ Phil is dismaller than ever to-night.’

‘ Is he ? That’s a pity.’

‘ And Fanny is gone to a wedding. She’s glad to get away, *I* know. I wish it was Phil’s—the wedding, I mean. But she would not have had to go away then,’ he added. ‘ When shall you come back, Harry ?’

‘ I don’t know. Not for a long time, I hope.’

‘ I have been to go out for ever such a time,’ said Tom. ‘ And now father is ill, Phil says he cannot spare me. I wish Phil could go ; but he says he does not want a holiday.’

‘ Wouldn’t it be jolly up at uncle’s if you were there !’ remarked Harry. ‘ You would like it, Tom.’

‘ I say, Harry,’ resumed Tom, without noticing his friend’s observation, ‘ I think something is going to happen at our house.’

‘ What sort of a thing ?’ asked Harry.

‘ I don’t know, exactly,’ was the reply. ‘ I

had half a mind to say something to Stanton about it, but I didn't, somehow; and now I shan't have a chance; and Phil is in such a queer mood, that I don't know whether he would do any good—Stanton, I mean.'

'Well, you can write,' suggested Harry.

'It does not do to write about such things,' was the reply.

'What things? I don't know what you mean.'

'Well, I don't know, either. But don't say anything to any one except Stanton.'

'All right. I expect he'll come back before the rest.'

'That's a blessing!' cried Tom. 'I say, Harry, you'll write, won't you?'

'Oh, I'll be sure and write. But it's getting late, and I must be off; so, good-bye!'

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WESTMORELAND.

‘ I wear his last look in my soul,
Which said, “ I love but thee ! ” ’

MRS. BROWNING.

THE journey was not a very lively one. George was, of course, very quiet ; and, though he travelled in an invalid carriage, he was sadly tired before the day was over. Mrs. Mansfield was feeling severely the effect of the long and anxious nursing on both mind and body. Harry was disheartened by Tom’s communication, and Stanton’s mind was also occupied by sad thoughts. While they had been waiting for the carriage to take them to the station, Harry had related to his brother what Tom had told him.

Stanton wished very much that he had seen more of Tom during the last few weeks, but he had been so much occupied with nursing his

brother, that he had had little leisure either of mind or of body, and in the intervals he had felt fatigued and harassed. The thought of what the poor boy might have to suffer during his absence weighed upon his mind. He reproached himself with having been too much absorbed in his own immediate objects of interest to think much of Philip's troubles. Stanton had been kind both in feeling and in manner to Lyndon, and he had tried once or twice to draw him into conversation, but the latter had been reticent and rather curt, and had shrunk from intercourse. Still Stanton could not help feeling that by a more active expression of sympathy he might have been the means of shedding some ray of comfort over that gloomy household. However, it was too late now, but he determined to be more watchful for the future.

There was a great rejoicing when the party arrived at Ainslie Grange. Blanche welcomed George with frank cordiality. She had been deeply touched by the account of his sufferings, and she thought that they must have the effect of softening his feelings towards Lyndon. She was very much disappointed, therefore, when Stanton told her of the bitterness that George had shown, which, indeed, appeared to have been

increased rather than diminished by their more frequent intercourse.

Blanche, on her arrival at her uncle's, had assured herself that it was a great relief to be in a place where Philip could not follow, and where she was safe from his attentions. In a few days, however, that impression wore off, and she began to realise that there was something missing. She could not feel so much interest as formerly in the old scenes. Everything seemed flat and dull. It required an effort to enter into her cousins' occupations and amusements. She began also to long to hear some news of Philip. When her aunt wrote to tell her how Reginald was, she did not mention Philip, neither did Reginald when he arrived; and after George's accident the same reticence was continued. They might have all entered into an agreement to say nothing about him, and he might have been a person of no more importance than 'that muff, Old Wood,' as Harry irreverently described that gentleman, or than Teddy Scott, Fanny Lyndon's empty-pated admirer.

Blanche began to be very anxious as to what changes might be taking place, unknown to outsiders, in her lover's affairs. He had spoken of them as in a critical state, and during this

long silence there was ample time for the development of the hidden dangers which surrounded him. She regretted very much now, that when he had wished to consult her, she had not been able to keep him to that point, instead of letting him recur to the question on which they never could agree. She felt, that could she have trusted herself not to betray to Philip her cherished secret, she would have been much better able to cope with her pertinacious lover, and also to advise and comfort him. She had an uneasy feeling that Stanton knew more than he liked to tell, and a word or two, inadvertently dropped by Harry, strengthened this suspicion.

The next day the travellers all felt a little tired. George, however, managed to make his appearance late in the afternoon. He lay on the sofa, while his mother and Stanton occupied each an easy-chair. Harry was gone out with his uncle and his cousins, but Reginald and Blanche had stayed behind to talk over home news, and to hear more particulars of George's illness.

‘Well, I suppose we ought to write to Lyndon,’ observed Stanton. ‘I dare say he is wondering how we are getting on. He said he should like to hear how George bore the journey.’

‘I am glad I am out of his clutches,’ remarked George.

‘Doctors are not the pleasantest persons in the world,’ said Reginald.

‘And Mr. Lyndon is not what one would call exactly a pleasant man,’ rejoined Mrs. Mansfield ; ‘but he is certainly very attentive, and he knows what he is about.’

‘In some things he does,’ said George ; ‘but I doubt whether he does in all. There are some very queer rumours flying about with regard to him.’

George did not think it necessary to add that it was he who had put them in circulation.

‘It seems he was an old lover of Mrs. Gordon’s,’ he resumed. ‘They did not seem to hit it when she was staying at the Hall ; but now that the Carringtons are gone to town, the Gordons are staying at W—— for the Major’s health, and I hear that Lyndon is a frequent guest, and is on very intimate terms, especially with the lady.’

Both Blanche and Stanton wondered how much foundation of fact there was for George’s statement. What George had heard was that Lyndon had been sent for to see Major Gordon, but that, after his first visit, he had declined going again, saying that he could not very well

spare the time that would be necessary to attend to the case. It was perfectly true that Lyndon had been over two or three times to W——, having run down, when he had an hour to spare, to see a college friend of his who was staying there.

‘What is Major Gordon about, to permit his visits?’ asked Reginald.

‘He has softening of the brain and is almost imbecile, Lyndon tells me,’ answered George. ‘He is quite helpless in Mrs. Gordon’s hands, I understand.’

‘If all this is true, aunt,’ said Reginald, ‘I really think that we ought not to employ him. It is nothing less than encouraging wickedness. If it can be proved, I shall certainly send for Mr. Wood.’

‘From what I can hear,’ observed George, ‘I think that most likely Lyndon will save us the trouble of dismissing him by being obliged to leave the town.’

‘I hope it is not so bad as that,’ said Mrs. Mansfield.

‘It will be a great pity,’ remarked Stanton, ‘when he has worked so hard to get that practice up; but I hope it will not come to that.’

‘Of course a good deal of it may be scandal,’ observed Reginald, ‘and I should be sorry to

lend myself to that. But we must not close our eyes to palpable facts. It would be as well, Stanton, when you return, if you were to find out what is the real state of affairs.'

'You had better ask Lyndon,' suggested George.

'If I become convinced that these things are true,' returned the curate, 'I shall think it my duty to remonstrate with Lyndon on the course that he is pursuing; and then, unless he will order his ways aright, I shall have no more to do with him.'

'You will get into a hornet's nest, Reginald, if you don't mind,' said George.

'That must be as it happens,' was the philosophical reply.

'I will dive into the matter when I get back, Reginald,' said Stanton, 'and then when you come we will have a consultation.'

Blanche was very much troubled by this conversation. She could not for a moment believe that George's charge was true. The deep affection that Philip had shown for her, constant as it had been through what, she could not conceal from herself, must often have appeared to him as the caprice of varying moods of feeling, and unquenched by the coldness and discouragement with which she had received it, could

surely not have so soon died away as to admit of his transferring his devotion to another—one, too, to approach whom he must have violated every dictate of right feeling and of honour. She did not think that it was possible, after what she had seen of the depth and earnestness of his repentance, that he could so far forget himself as to take such a step, and she felt sure, that, were he heard in his own defence, he could exonerate himself completely from the charge. She began to wish heartily that she was at home; she could then, at any rate, give him the comfort of assuring him that she did not believe this calumny.

‘I hope, Blanche,’ Mrs. Mansfield said to her niece the next morning, ‘that what George says about Mr. Lyndon is very much exaggerated.’

‘I believe that George has cooked it up himself,’ replied Blanche.

‘My dear! I don’t think he would do such a thing.’

‘Well, he has given it his countenance and helped to spread it, and that is as bad.’

‘I hope Stanton will be able to ascertain that it is not true,’ said her aunt. ‘At the same time we must remember, Blanche, that he is that sort of man, that one can never calculate exactly what he will do.’

‘He will not do that,’ replied Blanche decidedly.

‘You seem very confident about it, Blanche ; I hope that you are right.’

Clearly as Blanche could see her lover’s faults, and displeased as she had often been with the determined and vehement manner in which he had urged his suit, she could not but feel that his devotion to her was based upon something more enduring than passing fancy, or than the mere impulse of passion, which might die away as quickly as it had arisen.

As the remembrance came back upon her of his pleading tones, quivering with the intensity of his feeling, and of the expression of his earnest, truthful eyes, she felt that it would be an act of treason against his higher nature to doubt his truth and loyalty.

In the meantime the gloom that overhung the household of Mr. Lyndon seemed to grow darker every day. Mr. Lyndon himself was suffering from a violent attack of his old complaint, which caused his son a great deal of anxiety and loss of rest. Tom drooped after the Mansfields went, for he felt that he had no one to apply to in an emergency. It seemed as if the weight upon his mind was more than he could bear. He grew pale and thin and un-

certain in his temper. Philip, absorbed in his own troubles, did not notice the change in his brother. He would sit with his head leaning on his hand until Tom spoke to him, or some one entered the surgery. Sometimes the oppression was so heavy on him that it seemed to be impossible for him to bear up against it; that he must give way under the terrible pressure of the doom which appeared to be gradually closing in upon him. At another time there would come over him the remembrance of Blanche's sweet and gentle looks, the blush that had mantled her cheek beneath his gaze, the downcast eyes and the tone of softened feeling in her voice. Perhaps, after all, he had been too hasty in thinking that she was quite indifferent to him. He had little hope that the blow would be delayed until Blanche should return. How he longed to see her, to meet her look of sympathy, to touch her hand once more. But the gloomier mood would soon again prevail. It seemed impossible that one so pure should have any part with him. He must go on his own dark path alone to meet his fate.

As soon as Mr. Lyndon had sufficiently recovered from his illness, he started for a tour on the Continent, by way of recruiting his

shattered nerves. Tom appeared to brighten a little when his father was gone. He looked forward with an almost feverish anxiety to the return of the Mansfields. To Philip the release from the strain of his father's presence brought only additional listlessness and loss of energy.

CHAPTER XX.

A MOMENT OF TEMPTATION.

‘Now I feel the shadow
Of that surely coming doom ;
I will brave the breaking tempest,
Rather than this deepening gloom.’

LINUS.

THE sun was shining brilliantly through the fresh young leaves of the trees in the Walks, and the birds were singing merrily. The air was soft and balmy, and laden with the scent of flowers.

Tom was standing at the surgery-door. There was more life in his eyes than there had been lately. He looked up at the trees almost as if he had spirit enough to climb one of them. He did not move, however, but stood leaning against the door-post as if the still pure air refreshed him.

‘How glad I am that Stanton is come back

at last,' he thought. 'I will run and see him presently. I might have time before Phil comes back; but perhaps I'd better wait till after dinner, and then I'll bring him back with me to see Phil, and cheer him up a little.'

'Is Mr. Lyndon in, sir?'

'No; but he will be very soon. Do you want him?'

'Yes, I want to speak to him.'

'Will it take long?' asked Tom; 'because dinner is waiting.'

'No; not long. I will wait and see him.'

It was Syms, the Superintendent of police. Tom took him into the consulting-room. As he returned to the surgery he heard the sound of his brother's horse's feet, and in another minute Philip entered, and threw himself into a chair, as if he were very tired.

'Syms wants you,' said Tom. 'He is waiting in the consulting-room.'

His fate was come at last.

'Tell him to wait a minute.'

The voice did not sound like Philip's, so hollow was it.

'Oh, Phil! What is the matter? Are you ill?' cried Tom.

Philip's face was of the ghastly hue of death. His frame seemed to shrink together. He

looked like one who had received some dreadful shock.

‘Dear Phil, let me get you something.’

Philip made a desperate effort, and roused himself.

‘Go, and tell Syms to wait a minute.’

The tone of command was one that Tom never dared to disobey. He went reluctantly, and delivered his message, adding that his brother was not very well.

‘All right,’ was Syms’s reply. ‘But I hope he won’t be long.’

Syms folded his arms and gazed out of the window at the groom rubbing down the horse in the yard.

Tom hastened back into the surgery. Philip was just sitting down on the chair where Tom had left him. He had evidently been taking some medicine, for there was a bottle on the counter, and he still held the glass in his hand. Tom went to him, asking him anxiously if he were better. As he did so, his eye fell upon the bottle.

‘Oh, Phil, what have you done?’ he cried in horror. ‘You have taken the wrong medicine.’

Philip seized Tom’s hand.

‘Let me go, Phil, to call some one.’

Philip held his hand in a grip of iron.

‘Tom,’ he said, ‘let me die in peace.’

It seemed to Tom as if a lifetime of agony was pressed into that moment. He gave a cry which brought Syms from the consulting-room, and the groom from the yard. As they entered, Tom wrenched his hand from his brother’s relaxing grasp. As soon as he was free, he regained his presence of mind. He despatched a messenger for Mr. Wood, and told the others what to do, with a steadiness and promptitude that prevented all confusion. By the time that Mr. Wood, who was fortunately at home, arrived, Philip, who was suffering dreadfully, and was perfectly passive in his brother’s hands, was in bed, and everything that could be wanted was ready to hand, so that no precious time was lost in waiting for anything. During the short time that passed before Mr. Wood came, Tom had telegraphed for Dr. Morton, who lost no time in answering the summons.

Before the doctor arrived, Stanton, hearing of what had taken place, came to inquire after the invalid. He did not see Mr. Wood, who was busy with his patient, but, after hearing his report from Jane, he asked for Tom. Jane said that she did not exactly know where he was, but that she thought he was in the consulting-room, and thither accordingly Stanton went.

He found Tom huddled up in the easy-chair, in an attitude like that of some frightened animal. Stanton was quite startled when Tom looked up. His face was pinched and thin, and there was an expression on it as if he had gone through years of suffering since Stanton had seen him last. He sprang out of the chair and seized Stanton by the arm.

‘Oh, Stanton! this is dreadful! I can’t bear it!’

‘My poor boy!’ said Stanton ‘But Mr. Wood does not say that there is no hope.’

‘I did not mean that,’ replied Tom; ‘though that is bad enough.’

These words, and the expression of horror in the white young face, and in the large dark eyes, that seemed to be dilated to an unnatural size, betrayed to Stanton that there was something more behind than he had at first imagined.

‘Stanton, he did it on purpose.’

‘Impossible!’ cried Stanton.

‘He did,’ repeated Tom, fairly breaking down.

Stanton sat down in the easy-chair, and took Tom on his knee as if he had been a child; and then, between his sobs, Tom told how Philip had grasped his hand and said that he wished to die.

Words seemed weak and powerless in the

face of such a calamity. All that Stanton could do was to try to soothe with gentle caresses the poor boy who nestled up to him, his frame trembling violently from the effects of the shock and of the intense mental strain that he had undergone.

‘If Phil dies, what shall I do?’ asked Tom at length. ‘Oh, Stanton! how I wish you had come sooner!’

‘My dear boy, I would have come, if I had known that I could do any good.’

‘Poor Phil! He is suffering dreadfully, and he is so terribly unhappy——’ and Tom’s grief became too great to be expressed in words.

Stanton remained long in the same position. No sound reached the room. It seemed as if the house were hushed in mute horror at that which had befallen it.

‘Have your father and sister been sent to?’ asked Stanton, at length.

‘Father has not written since he left, so we cannot send to him,’ replied Tom; ‘and I had not time to think about Fanny till it was too late. Will you send her a telegram in the morning?’

‘Certainly, my dear Tom.’

‘I wish Fanny were here. Oh, if he dies before she comes! And she has often been so

cross with him, and I have been very naughty and impatient, and he was so unhappy! Oh, Phil, Phil!

Stanton's heart grieved for them all. He felt sure that Tom had borne the trial of his brother's temper with a patience that seemed almost beyond his years; but he knew that it would be useless to say so at that moment, as it would seem like an accusation of the miserable man who was now lying in the shadow of the grave.

'I think that is Mr. Wood,' said Stanton, as a rather slow step was heard in the passage; 'I must go and see what he says.'

'You will come back again?'

'Yes, my dear boy.'

Stanton followed Mr. Wood into the surgery. He shook his head sadly. Lyndon was alive, and that was all.

'But we must be thankful for that,' he added. 'If he does get through, he will owe his life to that little brother of his. He has done nobly.'

'I am very glad to hear you say that. But, poor fellow, it has been almost too much for him.'

'It must have been a great shock to him; but it was very well that he was here, for if there had been a little more delay, it would have been all up with Lyndon by this time.'

‘Poor fellow, sighed Stanton, ‘I hope he will not die.’

‘Ah! it will be a sad thing for them all if he does,’ said Mr. Wood, shaking his head again. ‘But we must hope for the best. Where is the little one?’

‘He’s in the consulting-room,’ replied Stanton, and led the way. ‘Tom,’ he said as he entered, ‘I have brought Mr. Wood to see you.’

He left them together, while he went home to get the latch-key and to tell the servants not to sit up for him. When he returned he found that Dr. Morton had arrived. He confirmed Mr. Wood’s opinion as to Philip’s state, but he seemed more hopeful as to his recovery, from having had more opportunities of estimating the strength of Lyndon’s constitution and his power of endurance. As Dr. Morton said that he would stay all night, Mr. Wood went home to rest.

On seeking Tom, Stanton found that he had been ordered to bed, but that he was very unwilling to go. However, when Stanton said that he would go with him, he agreed readily. Stanton sat by the bedside till Tom at length went to sleep, with Stanton’s hand in his. He was very restless, and in one of his turnings Stanton

disengaged his hand, and after going to inquire about Philip, who remained in much the same condition, he lay down beside Tom, and dosed at intervals. On waking at the early dawn, he missed his companion from his side, and was on the point of going in search of him, when a white figure stole into the room.

‘Tom,’ said Stanton, softly.

‘Stanton ! How did you come here ?’

‘I have not been away.’

‘Have you not ? I did not know that you were here. How kind it is of you to stay.’

Stanton, at Tom’s earnest request, undressed and got into bed. The dim grey twilight melted away before the growing sunlight, and the birds began to twitter under the eaves and among the branches of the trees upon the Walks.

‘Stanton, what a strange thing is death !’ said Tom, at length. ‘Before the day that is coming is over, Phil may have gone away for ever from this earth.’

Tom’s voice quivered, and the tears stole down his cheek.

‘Stanton, it seems almost too bad to happen.’

‘One who loves him better than we can do, Tom, will order for him what is best.’

‘I don’t feel as if any one could love him more than I do,’ replied Tom.

‘*He* can who put the love in your heart, Tom,’ said Stanton.

‘I never thought of that,’ answered Tom, musingly. ‘Oh, Stanton!’ he added, after a pause, ‘it seems impossible that we should lose him. What could I do without him?’

‘I don’t know, my dear boy. However, Mr. Wood says that if he lives, you will have saved him, Tom.’

‘Well, if he gets better, it does not matter who did it,’ said Tom. ‘There is some good in being a doctor,’ he added sagely. ‘I helped Phil the other day,’ he continued, ‘when the chemist’s little boy got into his father’s shop, and drank something or other that he ought not to, and Phil explained all about it afterwards, and the reasons of things, so that I knew a little of what would be wanted.’

As the light increased, and the early sunshine flooded the room, Tom jumped out of bed, and drawing up the blind all askew, he opened the window. The fresh dewy air came into the room, bringing with it the flower-scents from the garden, while the twittering of the birds had swelled into a chorus of sweet song.

‘It seems as if the bright sunshine would be

no good if Phil does not get better,' said Tom, as he turned away from the window. 'Dr. Morton is more hopeful than Mr. Wood, that is one good thing; and he said just now that it was a good sign that Phil could hold out so long; so he may get better after all.'

They lay quietly talking, with intervals of silence, until it was time to get up. Tom would not hear of lying in bed to breakfast. He went down before Stanton, and soon came up again with the joyful news that Dr. Morton had announced a little improvement in his patient.

Stanton intended to have returned home for breakfast, but Tom begged him so earnestly to stay, saying that as Dr. Morton was lying down, it would be so dismal for him to breakfast alone, that he yielded.

It was still early when Stanton left the house, and went to send a telegram to Fanny. He called again in the middle of the day, when he saw Dr. Morton, who held out a faint hope that Philip's life might be spared. In the evening, when Stanton came again, no further improvement could be reported, though no more unfavourable symptom had appeared.

'I have been with him a little while,' said Tom; 'he looks dreadfully ill, and he takes no notice of anybody. Fanny will not get here

till the midnight train. Will you go to meet her, Stanton, for she won't know whether Phil is alive or not, and I am so tired I don't know what to do.'

'My dear boy, you must go to bed at once.'

'There are so many things I want to say,' replied Tom. 'What are we to tell Fanny?'

'I don't know, I am sure,' said Stanton, rather startled.

'We don't know what it was about, you see,' continued Tom. 'I feel as if I could not tell her, and you would not like to.'

'It would be better for her not to know that I know anything about it,' answered Stanton. 'There is no need of telling her to-night, at any rate, and we must think it over afterwards.'

Stanton having persuaded Tom, who was quite worn out, to go to bed, went home and wrote to his mother, giving her an account of what had happened, thinking all the time what would be Blanche's feelings when she should hear of her lover's state. He then sat down with his elbows on the table, thinking. The image of Tom would present itself before him, with his young life crushed beneath the weight of his grief, and of the dreadful secret which had been the cause of the calamity, and which, in all probability, was even now in process of

disclosure. His thoughts then reverted to Fanny, pursuing her long journey in harrowing suspense, the swiftness of the train seeming, in her impatience, slow and tedious.

The idea of Blanche, too, would force itself upon him. He pictured her grieving for her lover with a sorrow, to which her knowledge of his past, and her fear of his present, unworthiness would add a bitter sting, and which, should he die, would leave a keen sense of unavailing regret and pain. To the question, as to whether Fanny should be told of her brother's deed, he found it impossible to find a satisfactory answer. To keep the knowledge from her would, Stanton knew, save her a great deal of sorrow ; but, on the other hand, ought she not to be told ? Philip would certainly wish it to be kept a secret, and, unless they knew what had caused the act, it seemed rather a hazardous thing to undertake. Stanton had little doubt that Philip had done it in the sudden impulse of the moment, under the intolerable pressure either of remorse, or of despair ; or that his mind, in a crisis of physical pain, had for a moment lost its balance. Had it been premeditated, Philip would have chosen a time and place which would have secured him from interruption, and a kind of drug, the

operation of which would have been fatal long before he could have been discovered. Stanton had arrived at no conclusion when the time came for his going to the station, and he set off in that direction with a slow and lingering step.

The train was late, but it came at last. Fanny sprang from the carriage almost before it stopped. The expression of her face, and the earnestness of her eyes, brought out her likeness to Tom more than Stanton had ever seen before. He grasped her hand, as she looked at him not daring to ask.

‘Dr. Morton gives a little hope,’ he said.

‘Thank God that he is still alive!’ exclaimed Fanny fervently, while her eyes filled with tears. ‘Where is Tom?’ she asked. ‘Is he not here?’

‘He is tired out, and is gone to bed,’ was the reply. ‘He asked if I would come and tell you how your brother was.’

‘Thank you. It is very kind of you.’

As they walked along the platform, he gave her a few particulars of Philip’s illness; and then, handing her into a cab which he had waiting, he lifted his hat as it drove away.

‘There are the elements of a fine character in her,’ thought Stanton, ‘if only they could be

properly developed. She has plenty of energy and common-sense—judgment too, if she would only use it; and she has deep affection and true feeling, when one can get at them. She may settle down into a sensible woman, after all.'

On Fanny's arrival at home, she heard from Jane all that she could tell about Philip, and also of Stanton's care of Tom, for which she felt very grateful. Mr. Jones, the young surgeon from London, who had arrived that evening to take charge of the patients, came down to tell her how Philip was. He seemed to be a good-natured kind of young man, not much more of a puppy, she thought, than might be expected of him. Fanny then went to see Philip. He moved a little when she kissed him, and he returned the pressure of her hand, but he gave no other sign that he recognised her presence.

As she came out of the room, she saw Tom stealing down the attic stairs. He rushed into her arms so precipitately as almost to knock her down. She took him into her own room, which was close at hand, and the two relieved their overcharged feelings by having a good cry together. Tom was then marched back to bed, with a strict injunction to stay there. Jane, who just then came to urge Fanny to come

down and have some supper, stated that he frightened her out of her senses by wandering about as he did. She was never secure in any part of the house, or at any time of the night, from coming upon his white figure, or from finding it at her elbow if she chanced to look round. It gave her quite a turn, she said ; and ever so many times she had taken it as a token of Mr. Philip's death.

CHAPTER XXI.

STANTON'S NEWS.

‘She heard with patience all unto the end,
And strove to maister sorrowful assay,
Which greater grew, the more she did contend,
And almost rent her tender heart in tway,
And love fresh coles unto her fire did lay;
For greater love, the greater is the losse.’

SPENSER.

‘HERE is another letter from Stanton, mother,’ said Harry, coming into the drawing-room at Ainslie Grange, on the following afternoon.

‘We had one yesterday, to say that he had reached home safely,’ observed Mrs. Mansfield, as she opened her letter. ‘I hope nothing is the matter. He sends bad news,’ she added, as she glanced down the page. ‘Philip Lyndon is very ill.’

The colour left Blanche’s cheek. Mrs. Mansfield read Stanton’s letter, telling how he had heard the report of Philip’s having come home unwell, and having taken the wrong medicine,

and of the almost dying state that he was in. Blanche sat still, as if she were petrified.

‘Oh, what will poor Tom do?’ cried Harry.

A feeling of compunction shot through George’s breast. Could Lyndon, driven to despair by the last words that had passed between them, and upon which his mind had most likely been dwelling ever since, have done this purposely, as the only way of escaping from his fate? Callous as George was, the thought of a human being brought to such a state of desperation by his means, was a very unpleasant one. He began to wonder, too, what Mrs. Gordon would think of it. It was likely enough that she would lay the blame on him, for he had lately had a note from her, which had been forwarded to him, cautioning him not to push the matter to extremity. Should Lyndon die, he trembled to think what might be the consequences to himself, if Mrs. Gordon should turn upon him in revenge for his going beyond her wishes.

‘It will be a sad thing for all of them if he does not recover,’ he observed.

‘In some respects it may be better for his brother,’ said Reginald. ‘What satisfaction,’ he added, ‘can there be to a man like him, when he comes to lie in the shadow of death?’

‘Is he not a man of good character?’ asked the uncle.

The curate gave his head a mournful shake.

‘I am afraid,’ he said, ‘that he will not be in a condition to profit by the ministrations of religion.’

‘Well, if he gets better, you must try your hand on him,’ suggested George.

‘I certainly shall, if he does,’ was the reply.

‘A severe illness,’ continued the curate, ‘may be the means appointed, in the providence of God, to soften the heart of stone, and to reduce it to a fit state to receive the divine grace.’

Mrs. Mansfield proceeded to read Stanton’s account of how Tom had acquitted himself in the hour of trial, and of Mr. Wood’s encomiums upon him.

‘He is a noble boy,’ said the curate, feelingly.

‘Poor Tom! I wish I could see him,’ said Harry. ‘May I go back, mother?’

‘That would be a shame,’ cried Cousin Harry.

‘If his brother gets better, he will do,’ said Mrs. Mansfield; ‘and you know he has Stanton. If he should lose his brother, you may go and comfort him.’

‘I think that we have rather neglected that boy,’ observed Reginald. ‘But he really is such

a piece of quicksilver, that it is difficult to know what to do with him. I think that he has solved the problem of perpetual motion, if no one else has. When I left, he had just begun to come to my Bible-class, and his very presence seemed to set the others all agog, even when he was not up to anything himself.'

Blanche took an opportunity, when her absence would not be remarked, of going to her own room, where her aunt, who soon after followed her, found her in tears.

'My dear Blanche,' said Mrs. Mansfield, 'I am afraid this is a great shock to you.'

'Oh, aunt!' cried Blanche, 'if he does not get better, 'I shall never forgive myself.'

'My dear, I don't see that you have done anything for which you need reproach yourself.'

'I am afraid I have been cruel to him, aunt. I knew how deeply he loved me, and I ought to have given him the hope for which he begged so earnestly. And now he will die, and I cannot comfort him.'

Blanche burst into a passion of tears, which, for a time, all Mrs. Mansfield's soothing could not calm.

'I believe that I could, as he said, have moulded him to my will,' she resumed; 'but I had not the courage or the strength of mind to

undertake it. I was afraid ; I was weak and selfish ; I could not face the trouble it would bring. I was unworthy of the task, and God has taken it from me !

Blanche bowed her head upon her hands in bitter weeping. Mrs. Mansfield sat still for some minutes in great consternation. This was a view of the case for which she was wholly unprepared ; and she felt rather shocked that Philip should have taken such possession of her niece's heart that his illness should cause the self-reproach and the overwhelming grief that she had witnessed.

‘Blanche, I am afraid you love him,’ she said sadly.

‘I *do* love him !’ was the vehement reply. ‘I have not loved him willingly. He has made me love him by his strong affection and his deep repentance, and by his truth and nobleness. I loved him, but I was not willing to take the duty or the responsibility of love. I shrank from it like a coward, and I must endure a coward's shame and self-reproach.’

‘Well, my dear,’ said Mrs. Mansfield, after a pause, ‘he may get better, and then we shall have to consider what is to be done. In the meantime, Blanche, you must not allow yourself to give way. I think your feelings are

rather excited by this shock, and you look at the matter with an overwrought mind.'

'No, aunt,' replied Blanche more calmly, 'I have had what I have told you in my mind for some time, not distinctly, but dimly shaped; but I put it away, and would not look at it until this has brought it vividly before me, and forced me to realise the truth.'

CHAPTER XXII.

TOM'S REQUEST.

‘Manhood wears
A haughty brow, and age has done with tears;
But youth bows down to misery in amaze
At the dark cloud o’ermantling its fresh days.’

HEMANS.

IN a week's time Dr. Morton was able to report a decided improvement in his patient, though he was still far from being out of danger. Philip was perfectly passive in the hands of his nurses, neither expressing a wish nor speaking, except when spoken to. Sometimes he was restless and feverish, but at other times he lay utterly listless, and without energy. Fanny proved herself a most devoted nurse. Tom had been very anxious to help. At first he was not allowed, on account of his having been poorly; but Stanton, finding that he was dwelling on it until his anxiety was likely to do him more

harm than the nursing could do, petitioned for permission to be given him, on which Fanny gave way. The groom, the father of the child with whom Philip had sat up, was anxious to take his part, as was also Dick, the boy who had been taken on trial, and whose turbulence had been quelled by the firm hand of Philip, who had at the same time won his affection by kindness.

Tom had only partially recovered from the effect of the events that had so shaken him, and his face often expressed a depth of melancholy which, even in the present anxious circumstances, seemed unnatural. He was very busy in helping Mr. Jones, who, coming fresh to the work, and being rather raw, did not take the firm grasp of things that Philip had done. There was also some confusion in his arrangements, as well as much dilatoriness in carrying them out.

Stanton, after the arrival of Mr. Jones, Fanny's return, and the improvement of Tom's health, had not been such a frequent visitor. When he did come, though he sometimes saw Fanny, he spent most of the time with Tom.

One evening when Fanny was gone to rest, and Tom had taken her place, he sat so long

with his eyes fixed upon his brother's face, that Philip could bear it no longer.

'Tom,' he said, 'what do you want to say?'

'Oh, Phil!' cried Tom; and then he stopped, shaking in every limb, partly in his eagerness and anxiety to say what he wished, and partly from apprehension of the effect that it might produce upon his brother.

'Don't be afraid, Tom,' said Philip, gently.

'Oh, Phil! I want you to promise me something.'

'What is it?'

Tom paused for a moment.

'Not to do it again, Phil,' he said, almost in desperation.

Philip shaded his face with his hand.

'Oh, promise, Phil, *do*!' cried Tom.

'Yes, Tom, I promise,' replied Philip, in a tone the utter hopelessness of which almost broke Tom's heart; and he buried his face in the bedclothes, his frame shaking with convulsive sobs.

'Dear Tom!' said Philip, his voice betraying his agitation, 'it is of no use your grieving for me.'

'Dear Phil! Don't be so miserable,' cried Tom, between his sobs. 'But here I am,' he

added, raising his head, 'making you ever so much worse.'

'Tom!' said Philip, 'you have not told anyone?'

'I told Stanton.'

Philip's countenance changed.

'I could not bear it!' cried Tom, writhing at the remembrance of what he had suffered. 'Phil, why did you do it?'

'Perhaps it was wrong. I did it in a moment of irresistible temptation. Tom,' continued Philip, with something of his old energy, 'you know what is right; always do it, and you will never be brought to such a pass as I am now.'

Tom pressed his brother's hand for answer.

'I must see Stanton,' said Philip, after a pause. 'Will you ask him to come in to-morrow evening?'

'He has asked to see you many times; but Dr. Morton said you must be quiet.'

'Quiet!' thought Philip. 'There is no quiet for me but in the grave.'

Dr. Morton demurred, the next day, when he heard that his patient expected a visitor, and he said that if they had anything to talk about, it had better be put off for a few days. Philip, however, soon settled the question.

'It is of no use your talking, doctor,' he

said, 'for I shall see him, whether you approve or not.'

'He is getting fractious,' observed the doctor to Fanny, who was present, 'and that is a very good sign. We shall have to obey orders soon, and mind our p's and q's, I can see. Well,' he added, turning to Philip, 'I suppose you must have your own way this time.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LETTER.

‘ Hide me, and let me sleep ;
Give me a lonely tomb,
So close, and so dark, and so deep,
I shall hear no trumpet of Doom.

‘ There let me lie, forgot ;
When the dead at its blast are gone,
Give me to hear it not,
But only to slumber on.’

H. E. CLARK.

It was with a heart stirred by various emotions that Stanton entered the chamber of the invalid. Sympathy with Lyndon in his sufferings and his trials was the uppermost feeling in his mind. With pity for him in the state to which his own hand had brought him were mingled horror at the act and something of wonder at the state of mind that could lead to it ; while the thought of those past sins, which had ever been a barrier between Philip and himself, was still pre-

sent with him, adding to his uncomfortable and disturbed feelings.

Stanton could scarcely believe that the face which he saw before him was that of the energetic and determined Philip Lyndon, for it wore an expression which betokened that the struggle was over, and had been succeeded by the passiveness of despair. There was a kind of patience, but no resignation. He was conquered, but not subdued. Though he waited for what should come, he did not shrink from it.

‘I must thank you for coming,’ he said, as Stanton took his hand.

‘I am glad that you are better.’

‘Well, I suppose I am,’ he replied. ‘But death looks at me with a kindlier aspect than life does, Stanton.’

‘You will feel different when you are stronger, I hope,’ answered his friend.

‘The past seems like a horrible nightmare,’ continued Lyndon. ‘My fate is closing round me. I have struggled against it, desperately, in vain. All I wish now is to die.’

‘My dear Lyndon, you surely take too gloomy a view of things,’ said Stanton, deeply touched.

‘Oh that I could lay down my burden of sin and sorrow, and close my eyes in the unbroken

sleep of the grave!’ said Philip, in a tone of hopeless weariness.

‘The sleep of the grave will not be an unbroken one,’ replied Stanton. ‘Heaven will dawn upon it.’

‘If I am not fit to be with the pure on earth, how can I be fit to be with the pure in heaven?’ returned Philip, with some impatience.

‘God is merciful. He will find a way,’ was the reply.

‘If He were merciful, He would annihilate that soul which, if it awake, will awake only to torture.’

Stanton shook his head, and Philip continued:

‘But I did not send for you to occupy your time with useless moaning. I have many things to say. The time is coming, Stanton, when this household will be scattered.’

‘Surely not, Lyndon,’ replied Stanton, in consternation, as he thought of what George had spoken of as probable.

‘There are many debts which my father left at L——,’ Lyndon resumed, ‘and heavy liabilities here, which I should have paid in time if I had been let alone. I have worked very hard, Stanton, but it has been all of no use. However, you must see Scott about that later on. What I wished to say now is about Tom. My

chief thought is of him. Fanny will have to shift for herself, and my father, if he chooses, can get some post by which he can maintain himself.'

'What can be the meaning of all this?' thought Stanton, as Philip paused.

'I don't know what will become of Tom,' Philip resumed. 'He will not be able to follow the path which he has chosen. He must get a situation, I suppose. My uncle is an army surgeon, and could not very well make a settled home for him; besides, he is not exactly suited to manage a boy of his age. I have been thinking a great deal since I have been lying here, but I cannot arrange anything for him. When the time comes, Stanton, will you consult with Fanny, and see what is to be done with him?'

'My dear Lyndon, I will do whatever I can,' said Stanton.

There was something almost terrible in the way in which Philip had portioned out the course of each one of the household, except himself. He had no share in the arrangements. There was no allusion to himself in them. Surely he had not settled all this with reference to a determined plan of self-destruction. Stanton felt that he could not let the matter pass unquestioned.

‘And you?’ he asked; ‘what are your plans for yourself?’

‘As far as I am concerned, my plans are ended,’ was the answer. ‘Others have taken up the threads of my life, and have woven them into a pattern that I did not mean. A doom is hanging over me which no human effort can avert. But I must tell you of that presently. Oh, Stanton!’ he continued, ‘my soul had sprung forward towards a nobler life! Led by an angel light, I might in time have gained peace and pardon. But all that is gone for ever. I shall trouble your cousin no more. Stanton. I have had a glimpse of heaven, and now I must fall back into the abyss, where there is nothing but darkness and despair!’

Philip covered his face with his hands, and for a minute there was no sound in the room but that of the short, quick gasps which told of the mental agony that the sufferer was enduring.

The silence was broken by a low tap at the door, which opened a little way, and Tom’s voice was heard asking Stanton to come out for a minute.

‘I have had a letter by this post,’ said Tom.

‘Well,’ replied Stanton, wondering what

there was in that circumstance so important as to necessitate Tom's calling him out of his brother's room to tell him of it.

'But it was not for me—at least, not all of it,' resumed Tom; and he read aloud his portion of the letter.

'It was addressed to 'Master Lyndon,' and was written in a lady's hand. The words which it contained were but few :

“MY DEAR BOY,

“May I trust you to give the enclosed to your brother, if he is still alive? Give it to him directly, as it contains something that may perhaps comfort him. Do it yourself, without telling anybody.” (And there, I have told you,' said Tom, interrupting himself.) “If it is too late, put it in the fire, and you will win the everlasting gratitude of

“ONE WHO WISHES WELL TO PHILIP LYNDON.”

'I don't know who it is from,' concluded Tom; 'but perhaps Phil will. The question is, are we to give it to him now? because both Mr. Wood and Dr. Morton said, that he ought to see no one, and have no letters, or anything.'

Stanton considered, and read the letter over

again. "May perhaps comfort him," he repeated, as his eye fell upon the phrase.

'I think we had better give it to him, Tom.'

'Well, so do I ; but I did not like to do it of my own head, without asking anybody, though I was told not to. I don't know whether I shall win What's-her-name's "everlasting gratitude,"' he added, 'as I have transgressed the rules. Will you give it to Phil, then, Stanton ? for I am going out with Jones, and he's waiting all this time. He's pretty patient, for a blessing !'

Tom hurried off, and Stanton returned to Philip's room with Tom's note and the enclosure, which was a letter with the simple words 'Philip Lyndon' on it. Philip was lying in the same position as before, but he looked up when Stanton sat down.

'I was afraid you were gone,' he said.

'Tom called me out to tell me that there is a letter for you.'

'I don't want it.'

Stanton explained how it had come. Philip listened attentively.

'Give it me,' he said. 'I know the writing,' he added, with a sigh. 'There is nothing good in it. Burn it, Stanton !'

‘Nay,’ replied Stanton ; ‘you ought to know what is in it.’

‘I do know.’

Still Stanton was not satisfied.

‘It does not seem right to destroy it without reading it,’ he said.

‘Open it, then, and give it me.’

Stanton did so, and Philip glanced his eye over it.

‘I cannot read it; the letters all run together,’ he said.

‘Shall I read it?’

‘Yes, if you like,’ answered Philip, a flush passing over his cheek.

Stanton read :

‘MY DEAR PHILIP,

‘It was a dreadful shock to me to read of your accident in the newspaper. I am afraid that you have been driven to it by G——. I shall never forgive myself for having, in a moment of jealousy, allowed myself to be led into countenancing his schemes, though he promised me that he would not drive you to extremity. I have written to G—— to tell him to put a stop to it, if it is not too late. If it is, I will denounce him publicly for the scoundrel that he is, whatever it may cost me.

‘If it can be stopped, you may follow the dearest wish of your heart without fear; and may you be happier than ever will be she who is your devoted, but wretched,

‘BELLE.

‘Will you get your little brother to write me a line to tell me how you are, and that you forgive me? Enclosed is the address of my maid.’

‘She would have saved me!’ cried Philip. ‘Too late! too late! Oh, Belle! Belle!’

Stanton looked at Philip in a state of complete bewilderment. Who was Belle? and who was G——? and from what was Philip to be saved?

‘I suppose I must write and say that I forgive her,’ said Philip, after a pause.

‘*You* can’t write. Let me.’

‘No, no! That won’t do. Give me some paper.’ Stanton looked round.

‘There is none here,’ said Philip. ‘Don’t go into the dining or the drawing-room, or Fanny will wonder what we are about. There’s some in the consulting-room. If you don’t see any lying about, you will find some in my *escritoire*. I don’t know where my keys are. Perhaps you had better call Tom.’

‘He has gone out,’ said Stanton.

‘Oh—well, rout about where you like.’

After a good deal of ‘routing,’ Stanton found them on the dressing-table. Philip was by this time getting into such a state of excitement that Stanton, in his desire to bring his task to a conclusion, ran downstairs so quickly as to bring Fanny out of the drawing-room in alarm.

‘Oh, Mr. Stanton!’ she cried. ‘What is the matter?’

‘I came down for something for your brother,’ he explained.

‘Can I give it you?’

‘No, thank you. He told me where to find it.’

‘I hope he is not talking too much,’ said Fanny, anxiously.

‘Well, I am afraid he is, rather, though it may relieve his mind a little; but he is just in that state in which it worries him to wait for anything, so I must make haste.’

Fanny returned to the drawing-room, and Stanton proceeded on his errand. He did not see any paper about the room, so he unlocked the *escritoire*. There was plenty there, and envelopes too, besides letters and various articles, all in no little confusion. In one of the nests, half folded in silver-paper, were some curls of soft brown hair, which Stanton had no

difficulty in recognising as Blanche's. He stood for a moment with the writing-paper in his hand, wondering how the hair came to be there ; and then, remembering his errand, he took a pen and the ink-glass from the table, and hastened upstairs again, fortunately meeting no one.

Philip was in a state of mental tension which greatly alarmed Stanton, who gave him the pen, supporting the paper on a book which he found on the table. Philip managed to scrawl the words :

‘I forgive you !

‘PHILIP LYNDON.’

And then he fainted. Stanton rang the bell violently, in his haste overturning the ink on to the carpet. He had just time to hide the letters under the counterpane when Fanny entered. It was long before consciousness returned. Philip lay as one who was dead, his face in its paleness looking more ghastly in contrast with the black hair and beard that surrounded it. When he had recovered a little, Fanny told Stanton that she thought her brother would be better quiet now. Low as she had spoken, the invalid had heard her, and he uttered a protest in the

shape of an almost inarticulate 'No!' Fanny motioned to Stanton to resume his former seat, and she sat down on the other side of the bed; and they waited in perfect silence, until Philip said that Stanton must stay a little while longer, and that he would come downstairs when he was ready to go. On this hint Fanny took her departure rather reluctantly.

'Where are the letters?' asked Philip.

Stanton produced them.

'You will direct that and post it yourself, Stanton.'

'Yes. I must take it home, because the ink has come to grief.'

He folded up the letter, and as he did so he glanced at the writing. He thought that Belle, whoever she was, and who seemed to have had some share in the mystery, could not fail to be more conscience-stricken, when she saw the writing, than she was before. The irregular zigzags might have been penned by some one under the torture of the rack. They, in truth, presented a picture, clearer than words could have done, of the mental and physical condition of him by whom they had been written.

'Now,' said Philip, when Stanton had fastened up the letter, and put it in his waist-

coat pocket, 'tear the address off the other letter and then burn it, and Tom's too. There are some matches somewhere.'

Stanton found them easily; and Philip watched with great satisfaction the two papers blazing in the fireplace, until they were reduced to a red-edged mass of black tinder.

'Now, I had better go,' said Stanton, as the last spark died out.

'Thank you, Stanton,' said Philip, gratefully. 'That was a great deal better than getting Tom to do it. But I have not said half I meant to say. When will you come again?'

'Whenever you wish. I should like to sit up with you some night.'

'You are very kind. It will be a good plan for you to come at night, and then we shall not be disturbed. Will you come to-morrow night?'

'Yes, if you wish it. But I think that you had better be stronger before we talk much more.'

Philip, however, would not hear of it being put off, and Stanton took his departure. He went downstairs more slowly this time. There was no danger of his being caught with the pen and ink, for the pen had vanished when Philip fainted, and Stanton had forgotten to look for

it afterwards ; and as to the inkstand, in handing something in haste to Fanny for her brother, Stanton had set his foot upon the glass and smashed it. When he got downstairs, Fanny, who was evidently listening, came out to meet him.

‘How is he ?’ she asked anxiously.

‘Very much exhausted,’ was Stanton’s answer.

Fanny ran upstairs, after a hasty leave-taking, and without giving him a chance of saying anything about their plan of his sitting up. However, he thought it did not matter, as he should call on the following day to hear how Philip was after the excitement of their interview.

When Fanny reached her brother’s room, she found that he was indeed, as Stanton had said, ‘very much exhausted.’ He was, in fact, scarcely conscious. He revived a little after a time, but when Mr. Wood came he pronounced the patient to be not nearly so well. Fanny felt very vexed at Stanton ; she thought that he had shown a want of feeling in allowing Philip to talk so much, and in staying so long. The finding of the broken ink-glass did not help to soothe her feelings, neither did the discovery of the pen, which she found in the bed when she

arranged her brother's pillows. What could they have been about? Surely Philip had not been writing a letter! It was very wrong of Stanton, very wrong indeed.

Philip had a very bad night. When Dr. Morton came in the morning, he inquired very particularly whether Stanton had stayed long on the previous evening, and Fanny told him of her brother's fainting, as well as of the incident of the broken ink-glass, and her own inference therefrom.

'I should have thought that Stanton would have known better,' replied the doctor.

'Young men never have any sense,' replied Fanny, indignantly, 'or feeling either.'

'Come, come, Miss Lyndon; that is a little too strong.'

'Well, very few of them, at any rate,' she said. 'Then he must see absolutely no one?' she added. 'I'll take care that he does not.'

'You'll have to look out, friend Stanton, or you'll catch it,' thought the doctor.

The next day, when Stanton called, Fanny told him, with an air of mingled displeasure and resentment, what were the doctor's orders; Stanton, however, made no attempt to defend

himself. He could not have done that without explaining that what he had done was at Philip's earnest request, and that, under the circumstances, to thwart his wishes would have caused much more serious evil than to accede to them.

On Tom coming into the room Fanny left them together.

'I am afraid the letter did not do him much good,' said Tom.

'Well, he got excited altogether. I was afraid that he would be worse after it. I could not help it, but it was very unfortunate.'

'They won't let you sit up with him for a long time yet, *that's* certain sure,' observed Tom. 'They won't let me, much,' he added disconsolately.

'Well, my dear boy, you don't look fit for it.'

'I may as well sit up, for I can't sleep. I lie awake hours and hours. How can one sleep when one's brother is perhaps dying?'

Tom's pale face and the expression of his eyes gave sufficient evidence of the grief which seemed to be consuming his young life.

'If he had been ill in any ordinary way, and

if he had not been so unhappy,' continued Tom, 'it would have been bad enough; but that would have been what everybody has to make up his mind to, sometime or other. But this is too terrible!'

Stanton did what he could to soothe the poor boy, who always seemed comforted by his presence.

'I almost forgot to tell you,' said Stanton, at length, 'that they are all coming home in a few days.'

'Oh, I am so glad!' cried Tom, his face brightening. 'It will seem good to see Harry.'

'Of course, Tom, you will say nothing to him of what has happened.'

'Oh no!' answered Tom; 'I shall tell nobody *that*.'

In a few days Philip was better. He had got back to the point at which he had been before, and there he stopped. He begged earnestly for Stanton to sit up with him, but the doctor would not hear of it, and Fanny had great difficulty in avoiding being cross with him about it. However, he was so persistent that at last Dr. Morton, seeing that he was doing himself harm by brooding over it so

continually, said that he would see. Fanny blamed him very much for giving way even so far, but she could not bring him back to his old point of view ; and he set off in search of Stanton, who, however, was gone to the bank, where the doctor followed him.

‘How is Lyndon?’ were Stanton’s first words.

‘He does not get on. I fear that his anxiety to see you is keeping him back ; and yet I am afraid of the consequences of your seeing him. Another relapse such as he had before would be an awkward affair. We shall have hard work to pull him through, if we don’t mind what we are about.’

‘Well, you must judge, doctor,’ said Stanton.

‘Is anything of an exciting nature likely to pass ?’ asked the doctor.

‘I am afraid so. I don’t expect that I shall be able to get him to put off what he wants to say ; but I will if I can.’

‘He told me that he was in a mess some time ago, poor fellow,’ said Dr. Morton, shaking his head. ‘If he could only keep his mind quiet he would soon be well—comparatively speaking, I mean—for he has a wonderfully good consti-

tution. I think, perhaps, you had better see him,' he added ; 'and I will go and tell them that you will come to-night, and you must do with him what you can.'

The doctor departed, after giving Stanton ample directions for his guidance during the night, and what to do in case of faintness. He cautioned him against allowing Lyndon to become more excited than could possibly be helped. When Philip heard that Dr. Morton had given his consent, his face assumed a more satisfied expression than it had done since his illness. He lay for the remainder of the day perfectly quiet ; and when Mr. Wood came in the evening, he said that the invalid was decidedly better.

'He will be a great deal worse to-morrow. You see if he isn't,' replied Fanny ; 'and then we shall have it all over again.'

When Stanton called in, on his way from the bank, to say that he was coming, and to ask what would be the most suitable time, Fanny felt that she ought to have asked him to come to supper, he being alone, and Tom and Mr. Jones being with her ; but, somehow, she did not.

'How stupid I am !' she thought, in vexation, half at herself, and half at him. 'If it

had been any one else I should have done it. I don't know how it is, but I seem to have no sense when he is here. However, I did not want him to think that I wished him to come.

END OF VOL. II.



